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MEDITATIONS

ON

THE LIFE, THE TEACHING, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

FOR EVERY DAY OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

WITH AN APPENDIX OF MEDITATIONS FOR THE
FESTIVALS OF VARIOUS SAINTS.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST GERMAN EDITION.

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† MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,

Archbishop of New York.

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PREFACE.

The present work is principally compiled from an old book of meditations by a Capuchin monk, Father Alphonsus von Zussmerhausen, Definitor and Vicar Provincial, published in Cologne in the year 1712, and entitled, "A Mirror of the Virtues displayed in the Life and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ." That old-fashioned but most excellent work happened, a few years ago, to come under the notice of a member of the same Order (now gone to his eternal rest) whose name appears on our title-page. Judging that, if clothed in modern language, remodelled and adapted to the exigencies of our own day, it would, according to the wish expressed by its author, prove "useful and profitable to all who desire to lead a virtuous and devout life and follow our Lord," he gladly, in compliance with the wish of his Superior, undertook the task of compiling therefrom a series of meditations for every day of the ecclesiastical year, suited for the use of Priests and of Religious of both sexes. So complete was the process of remodelling the original underwent, that it is no longer to be recognized in the volumes now before us; in fact the author of them compares himself to an architect, who being commissioned to restore an old house of solid construction and make of it a modern residence, finds it the better way, instead of repairing here and altering there, to pull down the whole structure, and rebuild it on the same site on a new plan, employing the same substantial materials, and only adding others where they

proved inadequate for his purpose. Thus the author took the greater part of his matter—the most solid and valuable stones needed for the edifice he was raising—from the work of the old Capuchin Father; he also introduces many apt quotations from well-known ascetical writings, such as Rodriguez' Christian Perfection, and the incomparable Imitation of Christ.

Let us hope that in the form in which it is now presented to the reader, as in its original shape, this work may, by God's grace, "prove useful and profitable to all who desire to lead a virtuous and devout life and follow our Lord;" and we hope most confidently that this will be so in the case of all those who take up this book, which breathes the spirit of the Seraphic Father, with the same simple good will wherewith it is tendered to them. He who humbly stoops his head may oftentimes find a jewel in the sand; and the soul of one who truly loves God will be no less incited to extol Him by the sight of the modest daisy of the field than by the splendid rose that blooms in the well-kept gardens of a palace.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL PRAYER IN GENERAL, AND TO THE USE OF THIS BOOK IN PARTICULAR.

A great master of the spiritual life has said that “the low standard of virtue which we observe and deplore in Catholics arises not from want of faith, but from neglect of meditation upon the truths of religion. The votaries of the world do not deny a single one of the truths the Church teaches, but they give no thought to them, and consequently they live as if they believed them not.” Hence we see that for all Christians, whether they live in the world or in the cloister, the practice of mental prayer is most important; it consists in placing before the mind the truths of religion, meditating upon them, and impressing them deeply upon the soul. A brief guide to mental prayer is therefore given in these pages.

Prayer is either vocal or mental; in each of these the soul holds intercourse with God. But whereas for vocal prayer only one of the three powers of the soul (the imagination or memory, the understanding, and the will) need be employed—for instance, the memory for the recitation of the Rosary—in mental prayer all the three powers are brought into play at once; the imagination places itself in the presence of God, the understanding contemplates His attributes and perfections, and the will feels itself drawn towards Him with all its affections.

This method of prayer must not, however, be looked upon as a merely mechanical process in which first the imagination, then the understanding, and lastly the will, take an active part in turn, for in mental prayer all the three powers of the soul are employed at one and the

same time, or at least in rapid succession; so that while the image of God is present to the imagination, the intellect meditates upon the subject presented to its consideration, and according to what that subject is, the will awakens affections, i.e., sentiments of charity, hope, contrition, or whatever it may be, and expresses them in a brief colloquy with God, in ejaculations and in good resolutions. Mental prayer is therefore a prayer in which the whole soul is called into action; it is not merely reflection, thought, discussion or study, but real and earnest prayer, the prayer of meditation. An example will serve to elucidate this point.

In reciting the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary merely as a vocal exercise, we keep before our memory the image of the Saviour wearing the crown of thorns while we repeat the third decade. But if we take the mystery of the crowning as the subject of our mental prayer, we not only keep before our eyes a vivid image of the thorn-crowned Redeemer, but whilst our imagination is occupied with this sorrowful picture, our understanding asks and answers these questions:

Quis? Who is it whom I now contemplate, enduring such acute sufferings? It is Jesus, my Lord and my God.

Quid? What is He suffering? Unspeakable agony.

Ubi? Where, in what part are His pains? In His sacred Head.

Quibus auxiliis? By whom, through whose agency? Through the Jews, whose sick He healed, whose dead He raised.

Cur? Wherefore does He thus suffer? To work out our redemption. To wash away my sins.

Quomodo? How does He suffer? With marvellous patience.

Quando? When does He thus suffer? After He had been maltreated by the soldiers, when He was exhausted by the cruel scourging.

While the understanding is busy in this manner, the will is constantly employed in acts of compassion, of gratitude, of contrition, in awakening feelings which express

themselves in ejaculations, and forming resolutions of a kindred nature. Does not this show you, O Christian, how superior mental prayer is to vocal, how much more is contained in it, how full is the knowledge it imparts of the divine mysteries, how it teaches one to love and admire them? Nor is this all: from mental prayer the soul derives power to practise virtue, to make the truths of faith and morals influential in daily life, a power which perhaps would not have been given had her prayer been merely vocal.

To take an instance: We will suppose that a Christian has been deeply offended and injured. His soul is in a ferment; resentment, anger, thirst for revenge rise up within him. Faith does indeed whisper to him: Pardon him, forgive your enemy! Moreover, his own good sense says to him: Let the matter rest; you will only worry yourself uselessly, what is done cannot be undone. But it is in vain these voices speak: rancor, the desire for revenge grow stronger. Presently the hour of meditation comes for the irate Christian; before his mental vision there rises up the picture of the *Ecce homo* in its touching pathos. He sees his God feeble and trembling, exposed to the vulgar gaze of the multitude, His sacred body torn with cruel scourges, His head crowned with sharp thorns, His pallid countenance covered with blood and spittle; and while he contemplates the pitiable image of a God tortured and mocked by His creatures, he grows calmer, and listens to the voice of reason, while it asks: Whose is this suffering form you behold before you, who is so brutally tormented, so grossly insulted? It is my God, One who is infinitely greater than myself. What does He suffer? Infinitely more than I do. And at whose hands? At the hands of men to whom He has been nothing but a benefactor. For what reason does He suffer? For my salvation. How does He suffer? With indescribable patience. And during the time that the understanding is asking and answering these questions, the will is not inactive; it awakens feelings of shame and sorrow on account of the impatience displayed under comparatively slight

grievances and trials; and at length—gazing in imagination on the Saviour, insulted so grievously and forgiving so generously, pondering in his mind the conduct of our great Exemplar—the aggrieved Christian forms the pious resolution to repeat the words of Jesus: “Father, forgive them.” See the happy results due entirely to mental prayer. Be diligent in the practice of it, O Christian; and if you are but a beginner, follow the directions now given.

First of all place yourself in the presence of God, that is to say, recollect yourself and banish from your mind all worldly thoughts and distractions, and place yourself in spirit before the throne of God in Heaven, or before our Lord in the tabernacle; or else think, as faith teaches you to do, that the omnipresent God is within you, around you, with you. When you are thus sensible of the nearness of God, implore the assistance of His grace in making your meditation, make a brief act of contrition for your sins, call upon our blessed Lady and your Guardian Angel, beseeching them to help you in your meditation. Then take up this book and read the instructions contained in it. Place before yourself the scene, think upon the truths, awaken the sentiments and form the resolutions according to its guidance. With this intention first read one paragraph or sentence of the meditation for the day; then close the book, and meditate upon what you have read in the manner indicated. At the close always make some definite resolution, which you will usually find given, one which is suited to your spiritual state, and conclude your meditation with sorrow for your distractions, thanksgiving for the light and graces you have received, prayer that you may be enabled to carry out the determination you have formed, and a brief petition to Jesus, Mary and your Guardian Angel.

If, however, you are accustomed to the practice of mental prayer, make use of this book as follows.

1st. At night, before retiring to rest, read through the meditation for the next day attentively. Mark the points on which you will dwell more particularly, and think them over before you fall asleep.

2d. When you commence your meditation in the morning, realize as fully as possible the presence of God. When you feel you have drawn near to Him, make an act of humility, of contrition and sorrow, invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit and supplicate the help of Mary and your Guardian Angel.

3d. Begin your meditation as you are always instructed to do in the book before you, by representing to yourself in imagination the person, place or object of the meditation. Having done this proceed to the mental prayer properly so called.

4th. Employ your understanding in the manner indicated in the preceding pages as well as throughout the volume before you, in considering the subject proposed for your meditation; make practical application of it to yourself, your faults, your spiritual state. Employ your will in awakening corresponding sentiments, form suitable resolutions, breathe forth ejaculations; and, supposing your understanding and will should carry you too far from the subject under consideration, or distractions should arise, from time to time recall the picture fancy painted to fix the actual subject in your thoughts. But if you feel strongly attracted by any one thought, and it is profitable to your soul, let your mind dwell upon it, even though it be somewhat irrelevant to the subject of meditation. "The Spirit breatheth where He will."

5th. At the close make a definite resolution for the day, suited to your spiritual needs. Bewail the faults you have been guilty of during your meditation. Give thanks to God for the graces you have received and pray our Lady and your Guardian Angel for help to carry out your resolutions.

Those who have sufficient time at their disposal may divide the daily meditation into two parts, and use one in the morning, the other in the evening. For this end three points are generally given.

When once you have made a beginning—and in everything the beginning is difficult—you will soon, O Christian, find that by diligent and daily practice mental prayer

will become day by day more easy and more pleasant. And even if at the outset, or perhaps later on, you experience no sweetness, but on the contrary mental prayer appears to you irksome and wearisome, do not be disheartened. The hour of meditation, apparently fruitless, is not wasted, for it is spent in God's service. Under these circumstances simply confess to God your misery and nothingness, that is all that is needed. As St. Francis of Sales says: Beggars know that to display their sores, their destitution, to the sight of their fellow creatures is the surest way of appealing to their charity. Nay, were you cold and unmoved as a marble statue during your meditation, you have not spent your time in vain, for, to quote again the gentle and saintly Bishop of Geneva, "In palaces and mansions statues are placed for no other purpose than that of gratifying the eye of their princely owner. Content yourself with serving this end whilst you are in God's presence. He will give life and warmth to the cold stone when He pleases. We should deem ourselves fortunate in being allowed to remain in God's presence. Look at the Magdalen. It seems to me she must have resembled a statue in its niche when she sat motionless, without uttering a word, at the feet of the Saviour, perhaps without even raising her eyes to His countenance, only listening to every word He said. When He spoke, she listened, and when He ceased speaking, she still continued to sit at His feet." Do you, O Christian, do likewise. In your meditation sit with Mary at Jesus' feet, listen to the words He will speak within you, and if His voice is silent, if despite all your efforts and exertions you remain cold and dry, stay tranquilly in the presence of God, at Jesus' feet, for a child, as St. Francis of Sales beautifully remarks, whom we see sleeping on its mother's breast, could be in no better place, though the mother says never a word to the child nor the child to its mother. Besides, such seasons of aridity are temporary; they are soon succeeded by times of consolation. You will never rise from your meditation without having enriched your mind with some good thought, without at least a salutary

sense of your own weakness and worthlessness, or without having taken some good resolution, if you keep to the rules laid down for your guidance in these pages.

Take courage, then, O Christian! Apply yourself diligently, apply yourself daily to mental prayer and you will soon experience that daily meditation is a kind of foretaste here below of the vision of God and the enjoyment of God which will be our portion hereafter, and to which mental prayer will surely lead us, if we adhere faithfully to the practice of it.

PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION.

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present. I acknowledge that on account of my many sins I am utterly unworthy to appear before Thy sacred countenance. Yet, confiding in Thy infinite goodness and mercy, I venture to address Thee, to call upon Thy holy name, and meditate upon Thy commandments, in order that I may acquire a better knowledge of Thy holy will, and accomplish it with more fidelity. Wherefore enlighten my understanding that I may perceive what I ought to do or leave undone for the promotion of Thy glory and my own salvation; at the same time excite my will, that I may repent with my whole heart of my past sins, and resolve for the future to do all that Thou requirest of me. Grant me above all to know Jesus, my divine Teacher and Guide, more clearly, that I may love Him more dearly, and consequently labor, struggle and suffer with greater generosity and self-sacrifice in imitation of His example. Holy Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, show Jesus to me now, and let me study thy divine Son to the salvation of my soul. Holy Guardian Angel, keep far from me all distracting thoughts; my patron saint, come to my assistance. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEDITATION.

O my God, I give Thee heartfelt thanks for all the graces and all the light Thou hast conferred on me during this meditation. Pardon me all the negligence and the distractions of which I have been guilty, and give me strength to carry out the resolutions that I have made. Fortify me, that from henceforth I may diligently practise this virtue . . . avoid this fault. . . . perform this action . . . to Thy honor. Help me to do this, O sweet Virgin Mary; and if I ever forget my good resolutions, I entreat my Angel Guardian to recall them to my memory. Amen.

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MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE, THE TEACHING, AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

FROM ADVENT TO SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

*MEDITATIONS UPON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD, FROM
HIS BIRTH UNTIL HIS ENTRANCE UPON HIS
PUBLIC MINISTRY.*

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE IRREVOCABLE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED BY THE JUDGE UPON THE UNGODLY.

In accordance with the exhortation contained in the Gospel of to-day, imagine yourself, my soul, present at the moment when the final act of the awful judgment commences. Behold how the divine Judge turns towards those who are placed on His left, His countenance inflamed with just wrath, and pronounces the sentence of their eternal doom in these despair-inspiring words: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels." (St. Matt. xxv. 41.) And when this scene has duly impressed itself upon your mind, consider:

1st. What an unfathomable depth of sadness there is in those few words the Saviour utters: "Depart from Me!" Depart from Me, He says, depart from your God and your Creator; depart from Me, your Redeemer and your Sanctifier; depart from Me and from all whom I call My own;

from My blessed Mother, who has pleaded in vain for you obdurate sinners; from My angels and saints, to be happy for ever with whom I created you. In order to draw you to Me I allowed Myself to be cruelly pierced with thorns, to be transfixated by nails, to have My heart wounded with a lance. Alas! O thorns, in vain you tortured Me; O nails, in vain you pierced Me; in vain for these sinners did I shed My blood. "Depart from Me!" Consider, my soul, what this really means; it means to be eternally separated from the Supreme Good, to be eternally cut off from the company of Mary, the glorious Queen of Heaven and of all the saints; and moreover to dwell for ever with the devil, to be for ever in the society of those who cease not to blaspheme God, to burn for ever in the fires of hell. And when you have contemplated, and in a measure realized the awful condition of the lost, consider for your own spiritual benefit that now in this season of Advent our Lord calls to the unhappy sinner: "Come unto Me!" If you refuse to listen to this gracious invitation now, you will one day be compelled to listen to the terrible command: "Depart from Me!"

2d. Consider what follows upon the passing of this sentence, "Depart from Me!" We are told in the Gospel: "And these shall go into eternal punishment, but the just into life everlasting." (v. 46.) A spectacle never before seen since the world was made! At the same instant in which the elect, welcomed by the angels and all the saints, singing hosannas, jubilant and joyous, mount up to Heaven in triumphant procession with Christ in their midst, at the same instant, we are told, beneath the feet of the reprobate the abyss of hell will open, with its terrific gloom and black darkness, its unquenchable flames. A son who is lost will be seen to cast one last despairing look at his father as he beholds him ascending to Heaven; the sister who is damned will once more gaze with anguish of heart upon her brother as he joins the company of the blessed; and for the aggravation of the torment he will suffer in hell, the Religious will for the last time raise his eyes to the realms of celestial bliss, to gain which he as-

sumed the habit, and the attainment of which might have been so easy to him had he closely observed his Rule. He sees hundreds of his brethren ascending to Heaven, while he, amid the heart-rending cries of the lost, the despairing howls of the demons, falls headlong into the jaws of the abyss; they close over the hapless sinner, never, alas! nevermore to be unclosed.

Ask yourself, my soul, where you will find yourself on that day, in the ranks of the elect or of the reprobate? In order to attain certainty on this point, consider:

3d. Why must this irrevocable sentence of damnation, “Depart from Me!” be pronounced upon the lost? The answer is this: Because God cannot do otherwise than banish for ever from His presence those who hate Him, and will hate Him for ever; and those will hate Him for ever who die in hatred of Him, in a state of mortal sin; for we are told that: “In what place soever the tree shall fall, there shall it lie.” (Eccles. xi. 3.)

O my soul, you are now making this meditation, but can you tell whether you will make the next? And supposing that, will you not ask yourself, if the tree were to fall this very day in your case, where, in what direction would it fall, and what ought you to do, what will you do before this day is ended to secure your salvation?

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE EARNEST LONGING OF THE HOLY PATRIARCHS FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

How melancholy, how desolate it would be upon this earth, if winter were always to prevail; if the sun retreated further and further away from our globe, until at last his rays scarcely reached us! How intense would be the desire, the longing of all mankind, to witness the return of the life-giving orb, before the face of the earth was covered with an icy mantle, and all Nature was be-

numbed and frozen! Now what the sun is to the earth, Christ is to mankind.

1st. Consider first how fervently the patriarchs longed for the advent of the incarnate God while they yet lived on earth. They desired it greatly for the sake of the human race. They saw all around them the profound misery of mankind, who were languishing in the awful darkness of unbelief and superstition, and grovelling in the foul mire of sin and vice. And, contemplating this deplorable degradation, the longing of those holy men for the Redeemer must have been all the greater, because they knew that through His coming alone could an end be put to this misery. Try to realize vividly and share in this yearning of the holy patriarchs, my soul; and then ask yourself whether the evil you see around you in the present day, when unbelief and corruption of morals prevail to such an extent in the world from which you have withdrawn yourself, to seek shelter as in Noe's ark in the Priesthood or the Religious state, is much less than it was in the days of yore, and whether you experience no longing, no fervent desire that our Lord should again visit our unhappy world with His grace. Or ask yourself what you can, what you will do by means of prayer and penance, by the exercise of your sacred ministry, to shorten the world's sad season of expectation and accelerate the coming of a joyful Christmas.

2d. Consider further how great was the longing felt by the patriarchs for the incarnation of the Son of God during the period of their detention in Limbo. They yearned for it ardently for their own sakes. They were aware that they could only be released from their prison-house, and conducted to the eternal light of celestial glory, by the coming of the God made man. How often must they have exclaimed in the words of the prophet: "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour." (Is. xlv. 8.) But how is it with you, my soul? Perhaps it is not for you to long for the coming of the Saviour for the sake of your unhappy fellow-men; your condition may be

even more pitiable than theirs; perhaps you are held captive in a prison far more dismal than the Limbo wherein the patriarchs were detained, in that Limbo, that ante-chamber of hell whence you pass into hell itself—that is to say, a state of wrath, of mortal sin. And if this should be the case, how great ought to be your longing to be delivered from this prison by the advent of the divine Child!

3d. Consider the unspeakable delight and exultation of the patriarchs on learning that the Son of God had already assumed human flesh of the Blessed Virgin, and that very shortly He would be born into the world. How they must have rejoiced and exclaimed in their gladness with David: “Show us Thy face, O Lord, and we shall be saved.” (Ps. lxxix. 4.) How triumphantly they must have reechoed the words of the Royal Psalmist: “Therefore my heart hath been glad and my tongue hath rejoiced; moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope; because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.” (Ps. xv. 9.) And when you have meditated upon their joy, my soul, then think upon the words St. Bernard once said: “I am cut to the heart, I am filled with confusion, I can scarcely refrain from weeping, because of the sloth and indifference of these evil days in which we live.” Have you not reason to be ashamed, my soul, at the indolence and indifference that are manifested in preparing for the approaching advent of our Lord; the event which filled the patriarchs with so great joy and gladness? And consider well: If you no longer experience the same longing, the same holy exultation in the anticipation of the sweet festival of Christmas, now approaching, as in the days of your childhood, or in the first years of your Religious life, what is the cause of this change, and what will you, what ought you to do, in order that it may again be with you as it was in bygone days?

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE ETERNAL DECREE OF GOD NOT MERELY TO CREATE MAN, BUT ALSO TO REDEEM HIM.

To-day, my soul, you are required to soar aloft into the illimitable realms of space, and look far back into eternity, before time was, before angels or men were created, when nothing—absolutely nothing—existed but God alone. And when you have endeavored to comprehend this and to impress your mind deeply with the idea of the Deity, the Triune God, enthroned in unbroken solitude, in majestic repose, in perfect felicity, then consider:

1st. How this God, who is alone sufficient to Himself, who is infinitely happy, infinitely blessed and has need of nothing beyond Himself, yet determined to permit other beings to participate in His happiness, to share in the same bliss that He enjoys, and for this purpose to create man. O unspeakable loving-kindness of our God! Nothing, nothing of any kind moved Him to form this resolution; not any merit on your part, for you had none; not your prayers and entreaties, for as yet you did not exist—but solely His great charity. O miserable worm of earth! See, even before you were called into being, before the world was made, from all eternity God thought of you. Of a truth had He done nothing more for you than this one thing in that He created you, you could never thank Him sufficiently, though you lived to reach the years of Mathusala. But He did far more than that.

2d. Consider that when God determined to create man, destining him for eternal happiness, He did not stop short there, but determined further to make it easy for him to attain that happiness. If a monarch granted you permission to come to his palace, a palace of surpassing beauty and attractiveness, and to enjoy with him the magnificence, the wealth that adorns it, you assuredly would not require him to send his own servants to fetch you and

conduct you to it. But God in His inconceivable goodness and bounty even goes so far as that. From all eternity He resolved to endow man, whom He was about to create, not only with all natural gifts and mental powers, but also to bestow on him supernatural gifts and graces for the attainment of his final end; nay, more, to create thousands and tens of thousands of creatures and worlds that they might serve to incite man to a closer knowledge, a greater love of God, and thus bring him onward more quickly to his ultimate end. O incomprehensible bounty! A God who from all eternity, before I was so much as made, provided for my welfare like a loving father, and thought of the means of making me happy! Weep, my soul, to think how seldom hitherto you have thought of God, and if now you begin in some measure to learn how to love Him, exclaim with St. Augustine: "Too late have I loved Thee, O my God!"

3d. Consider finally, in order, so to speak, to drink to inebriation of the overflowing wine of divine charity, how God did not merely determine in Himself in eternity to create man, to endow him with every means necessary for gaining eternal happiness, but resolved furthermore not to abandon man, even should he misuse all the benefits He intended to confer upon him. O God of love! Thy charity is past our comprehension. Thou didst determine to cast out the fallen angels, but to redeem fallen man. Awake then, my soul, plunge yourself by meditation into this abyss, immerse yourself in this ocean of divine charity. You may perhaps even to-day experience some measure of contrition for your past coldness and ingratitude, and you may perchance now find it somewhat easier to bear the yoke of self-denial and mortification which your vocation or the rule of your Order lays upon you during this bleak season of Advent.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE ETERNAL DECREE OF ALMIGHTY GOD TO REDEEM MANKIND BY THE INCARNATION OF HIS DIVINE SON.

Fix your mental vision, my soul, upon the Triune God, after He had resolved to create man. The future sin of man stands out before His all-seeing eye, He foresees how shamefully His goodness and charity will be abused. Why then does He not forego His purpose of creating man? St. Augustine answers this question when he says: In His infinite wisdom God judged it preferable to bring good out of evil and have compassion upon man, than not to permit evil at all. Ponder awhile on these words, uttered by one of the Fathers of the Church, and consider:

1st. That the divine wisdom and omnipotence are exhibited most gloriously in this very thing, that, despite His prescience of the evil to come, God yet resolved to create man. Had He allowed Himself to be influenced by the sin of man in the future, to be deterred from executing His eternal decree, evil would in very truth have triumphed over Almighty God! No; as light appears in its full brilliance when contrasted with darkness, so the divine omnipotence, as well as the divine wisdom, revealed itself most brightly by this, in that it had at command a thousand means of converting evil into an occasion of good, and not only to carry out what had been fixed from all eternity, but to do for man greater things still. For only consider:

2d. Although the power and wisdom of God might have employed various means of rescuing man, yet His charity made choice of the most excellent, the most marvellous, the most rich in loving-kindness of all those means, namely, the incarnation of His Son. By the God made man satisfaction was to be made to the God whom man had offended; man, fallen so low, so far from God, was destined to be raised higher by the man-God than he would have been had he never fallen, for he was to be ex-

altered above the angels, whose nature God did not assume. O my soul, it is indeed enough to fill you with amazement, when you endeavor to fathom the depths of this divine decree; you will ask in doubt which is most to be admired, the omnipotence or the goodness or the wisdom of God, and how it is possible that hitherto you have thought so little, and with such cold indifference, on the mystery of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3d. Consider finally how the Son of God immediately declared Himself ready to carry out, in God's own good time, the decision formed by the Blessed Trinity, and how the Father and the Holy Spirit gladly accepted His offer. Stupendous thought! Before I existed, before I was conscious of my being or of anything connected with my being, the Infinite and most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, took counsel together regarding my destiny. O poor worm of earth, from henceforth, whenever you pronounce the names of the three divine Persons, bow, not only your head, but also your heart in profound reverence, adoration and love; and if the accomplishment of God's commands, the observance of your Rule, this or that employment, or any work assigned you, appears arduous and irksome, then instead of murmuring and complaining say: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; and your heart must indeed be hard as a flintstone if, after the meditation made to-day, your task does not appear to you less difficult than it did before.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE GREATER GLORY RENDERED TO GOD THROUGH THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD.

It has been a question with many whether by the incarnation of our divine Lord, God had not stooped too low, and thus derogated from His majesty and glory. In order to close your mind against this idea, my soul, go back in

imagination to that first Sabbath morning, when God the Father, seated upon His throne, received the homage of all creation, when the heavens and the earth, when millions of worlds and tens of millions of created beings burst forth into one mighty hymn of praise, to laud and magnify their Almighty Creator. How glorious is that moment! How magnificent the song of praise that resounds throughout all space! And yet, my soul, the honor and glory that accrues to God through the incarnation of His Son is far greater. You are amazed to hear that this is so; therefore consider:

1st. There is nothing whereby the greatness and glory of God is more strikingly manifested than by miracles. When He changed water into wine, when He calmed the raging waves of the sea with a single word, when He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, even the coldest, most indifferent of mankind could not refrain from giving glory to God. Now of all the wondrous works of God there is none greater than the incarnation of His Son. For in very truth, which is the more marvellous, the change of water into wine, or the change which is effected in human nature by the incarnation of Christ? Which is more marvellous, the stilling of the angry waves of the sea, or the calming of the fierce, stormy waves of human passion which took place when God assumed the nature of man? Which is the greater miracle, to open the eye of man that is closed to the light of day, to give hearing to the deaf ear, to loose the stammering tongue, or to cure the whole human race, sick with the deadly malady of sin, and not merely to cure it, but at one and the same time to raise it out of its condition of deep degradation and place it on such a height as could only be attained through God taking upon Himself the nature of man? Nor is this all: through His incarnation God did not only restore man, who had fallen so low, to his original position; He did not only exalt him above the angels, but —O astounding thought for us worms of earth!—He raised mankind in and through Christ to a divine dignity, to divine sonship, to intimate union with the Triune God!

Can you conceive a more wondrous elevation of the creature, can you imagine a more stupendous miracle? Now if any and every miracle is an ascription of praise and glory to Almighty God, how vast must be the glory accruing to Him from this miracle of miracles!

2d. Consider how the glory of God was also greatly increased by the incarnation of Christ, because it was the first occasion whereon infinite praise and honor were ascribed to Him. Great and glorious as was the song of praise of all creation, which you imagined yourself hearing at the commencement of this meditation, it was yet comparatively poor and insufficient. Even the hosannas of angels and cherubim are finite praise. But since it was determined, in the counsels of the Most High, that the divine Son should take upon Himself human nature, since therefore human nature is in the person of Christ inseparably united to the divine nature, man's ascription of praise assumes a different character, it is ennobled, in a certain sense divinized, it bears the stamp of infinity. From the lips of the divine Infant, as He lay in the crib, from this God made man, the Most High received the first tribute of infinite praise, and this infinite praise has never been hushed. Wherefore God the Father looks down from heaven upon no ascription of praise with as much satisfaction as on that which ascends from mankind, whose nature His divine Son assumed. Consequently the praise rendered to Him by one single human being is of more value in His sight than that of all the rest of irrational creation.

And now, my soul, have you not cause to blush because you have hitherto been so slothful in giving glory to God? Can you say with David: "Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee" (Ps. cxviii. 164)? See that from henceforth when the sound of the bell summons you to the choir, to join in divine worship, you obey without delay; do not rub your eyes and consider whether you shall rise, but rather put aside your employment at once; remember that you are called upon to sing the praises of God, and that this is the noblest work man can perform on earth, as you learn from the meditation of to-day.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

BY THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, THE MOST GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTES OF GOD ARE MADE APPARENT.

Once more, my soul, you will have to fix your thoughts during your meditation on the mystery of our Lord's incarnation, and focus on one point the different lights which you have gained in the course of your previous meditations on this mystery. We know how a traveller willingly stops on his way, and stands still for a few moments to look upwards at the sky, when a bright rainbow spans the wide vault of Heaven. So you would do well to pause awhile before passing to another subject of meditation, to contemplate how, in the incarnation of Christ, the seven principal divine attributes shine forth, as in the varied hues of a beauteous rainbow. These are:

1st. The Omnipotence of God. He performs the highest possible act, one which no man of himself is capable even of conceiving, for He causes God to become man, and man—see that you understand this aright—to become God.

2d. His Goodness, which stoops so low that by joining His divine nature to human nature in the hypostatic union, He enters into the closest relationship with each individual member of the human race.

3d. His Charity. God gives to us what is dearest to Him, His Son, and in such a manner that He becomes one of us.

4th. His Mercy. Do not ever forget that God does not grant all these benefits and blessings to creatures who have merited them by their obedience, their love, etc., but to sinners, rebels, subjects guilty of high treason.

5th. His Justice. God is not content with simply granting us remission of sin, as He might well have done had He so chosen. He causes the penalty of our debt to be paid by His own Son, who became man, in order to satisfy the divine justice in our place.

6th. His Wisdom. The mercy of God demands the pardon of man; His justice requires his punishment. Supreme Wisdom devised the means of satisfying these antagonistic claims: the Son of God of His great mercy became man, in order as man to appease the divine justice.

7th. His Holiness. It is the will of God to raise man from the degradation into which he fell, and restore him to the highest possible point of perfection and sanctity. He does not however with this intention send out His holy angels to show man the way of holiness and teach him to walk in it; no, the all-holy God does more than that. His own Son must become man, in order that by His teaching and His example He may bid us: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." (St. Matt. v. 48.)

My soul, this is but one mystery, one however which offers so abundant, so inexhaustible a store of matter for meditation, that one might well devote to it, not as you have done, a few days, but whole weeks of meditation and deep reflection. What a treasure-house have we not then in all the truths of our holy Faith! It is like a vast mine, full of precious stones, abounding in gold and silver; why, then, do you not descend into it more frequently, and by meditation dig out these jewels? Why are you so dilatory in this respect, and why do you allow yourself to regard every trifling reason as of sufficient moment to excuse you from making one, if not both, of your daily meditations?

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE LOVE OF THE WORLD AS CONSTITUTING A HINDRANCE TO DERIVING PROFIT FROM MENTAL PRAYER.

What more melancholy sight than that of a waste and barren tract of land standing among cultivated fields! Good seed has been sown in it also, but the seed came to

nothing, and while the surrounding fields bear a fine crop of waving corn, this one remains untilled and unproductive, presenting a sad and desolate appearance.

Who can deny, my soul, that you too much resemble that sterile field? Has not good, excellent seed been sown in you during your daily meditations on the incarnation of our Lord? Yet you have remained dry, cold, and no fruit has been produced. Whence is this? There are several reasons to account for it, and in order to acquaint ourselves with them, and thus render ourselves better able to eliminate them, we will, before proceeding further to meditate upon the great mysteries of religion, ask ourselves what are some of the principal hindrances which stand in the way of our meditations being fruitful. One of the foremost of these is the love of the world.

1st. Only consider the saint whose feast falls early in Advent, St. Francis Xavier. In the midst of a terrific storm, which lashed the waves of the sea into fury, tossing the vessel violently to and fro, so that her timbers creaked and threatened to part asunder, the saint might be seen kneeling in a corner of the tempest-rocked ship as calmly as if he were in some quiet church on the mainland. And while all around was enveloped in thick darkness, his countenance shone with the radiance of holy devotion. Whence came this spirit of contemplation, whence this supernatural ardor? It was the Holy Ghost who kindled that fire in the heart of the great servant of God. Holy Scripture tells us that “the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings” (Rom. viii. 26); and these words are specially true in regard to mental prayer. It is by the Holy Ghost that you are enabled to understand that which, in accordance with the counsels of God the Father, you have received through the teaching of God the Son, the precious deposit of the Faith. God the Father decreed the redemption of man, God the Son accomplished the work, but it is God the Holy Ghost who gives us the power to comprehend it aright and make use of it to our profit. Consequently without the aid of the Holy Spirit no mental prayer can be good or profitable.

Now nothing is a greater obstacle to the operation of the Holy Spirit in your soul than the love of the world.

2d. Consider in the first place what the love of the world really is. St. Augustine says: By the world we mean the affection that is set on the world; that is (to quote Dionysius the Carthusian) more attached to what is earthly, transitory, vain, than what is divine and eternal. David speaks of these empty, idle things of earth as "lies," because they are all deceptive and misleading. If then your heart is worldly, if it loves the world, it loves what is a lie; and how can the Spirit of truth enter into such a heart? So if your heart loves the world, the pleasures of the world, the wealth of the world, to you must be applied the words of St. John: "The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth." (St. John xiv. 17.)

Furthermore, according to St. Augustine the love of the world is an uncontrolled desire to obtain what the heart covets. And not only does this inordinate desire engross the whole heart, take possession of the whole mind, but, the same holy Father of the Church asserts, since the heart or mind contracts a resemblance to the object it loves, so your heart will acquire the evil characteristics of the world; its vanity, sinfulness, falseness.

And now consider how can the sun of the divine mysteries upon which you are to meditate light up a heart, be mirrored on its surface, if, entangled by the love of the world, it has become a spiritual swamp and morass? Wherefore consider:

3d. Whether you entertain in your heart any love of the world. St. Bonaventure suggests a simple method of discovering this. "The thoughts of a man," he says, "dwell most constantly on the object he loves best." Now ask yourself, what are the thoughts which most frequently creep into your mind during mental or any other prayer? What do you love best to think about when you are at work, or during your leisure hours? Do you not perhaps by some little postern-gate of your thoughts and wishes give admittance again to the world, although on the day of your entrance into the cloister, or your admission to

Holy Orders, or on the day of your conversion, you closed the door against it once and for ever? Up, then, my soul, sweep out your house, drive out of it these unholy intruders, these worldly thoughts and desires; without further delay prepare a clean and pure resting-place for the divine Child who is soon to come, remove this obstacle to the entrance of the Holy Spirit, this impediment to the fruitfulness of your meditations. Otherwise you may have reason to fear lest, although to the eye of man you appear dead to the world on account of the garb you have assumed, if you still beneath the habit or the cassock cherish the love of the world in your heart, you merit to hear the woful sentence which our Lord pronounced upon those who outwardly wear sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening wolves.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON JOHN THE BAPTIST IN PRISON.

Picture to yourself, my soul, this day, John the Baptist in prison, as the Gospel of to-day places him before you. Behold this saintly man loaded with chains, confined in a darksome dungeon, expecting every moment to be put to death; then consider

1st. The reason why Herod cast John into prison. The life led by this great prophet in the wilderness was one of such extraordinary sanctity, that all the people came forth to him from the towns and country. A great many believed him to be the prophet Elias risen again; others even thought that he was the promised Messias. His example as well as his preaching, incisive as a two-edged sword, converted the most hardened sinners, and Herod himself could not withhold his admiration from the great preacher of the desert, whom he heard gladly. But presently he conceived an illicit passion, and then all the good resolutions which the sight and the exhortations of the Apostle of penance may have elicited in him, were cast to the winds; nay, so completely did the spirit of impurity

master him, that he did not scruple to apprehend John, and despite his innocence, his great reputation, and the esteem he himself felt for him, to put him in prison. O my soul, nothing is more to be abhorred than the spirit of impurity! If you do but once let it penetrate into your heart, although only in thought or desire, then farewell to all idea of a Christian life, let alone the life of perfection. No blight is so baneful to the blossoming fruit-tree as the least touch of impurity, however slight, is to the Christian, not to speak of the Priest and Religious.

2d. Why did not Herod give up his illicit affection since he continued to listen to John's exhortations and was even afraid of him? Because this fear was purely human. Herod feared the judgment of man, not of God, as was proved by his life, and by his behavior when the death of the Baptist was demanded of him. This fear of man, says St. Chrysostom, does not prevent sin, it does not restrain the corrupt will. But the true fear of God corrects the intention and preserves innocence intact. See yourself, my soul, reflected in the person of Herod. As long as the fear of man, the dread of your Superior, the apprehension of disgrace, in a word, mere human respect, holds you back from sin, or from giving free rein to some passion slumbering within your breast, and fostered in thought and desire, so long you are never secure from falling into sin, nor will you cast off the yoke of concupiscence. Fear God, who sees in secret and who can cast body and soul into hell, for then only will you be preserved from sin and delivered from the servitude of sin.

3d. Contemplate the inscrutable judgment of God as manifested in the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Herod, a man sunk in vice and a perpetual scandal to his subjects, retains his high position, enjoys all the comforts and pleasures life can offer, whilst John, a mirror of virtue, a source of edification to all the people, is unjustly persecuted for speaking the truth, and subjected to the misery of a cruel incarceration. Thus God is accustomed to deal with those who fear Him, in order to refine them as gold in the crucible, and at the same time

prepare them for celestial brightness and eternal splendor. On the other hand, it is a dreadful judgment which He passes on the ungodly, when, instead of visiting them with salutary punishments and pains, He leaves them to lead a happy and prosperous life. That is like the last good meal, the feast which used to be set before condemned criminals on the eve of their execution; it is a recompense that the just God gives in reward of the few good actions which even bad men perform. But oh! what a poor and pitiable feast granted to the wretched sinner before he is cast into hell! Ponder upon this to-day, and derive from it consolation or warning.

Consider this also: That in his dark and dismal dungeon John was full of confidence, and could look death calmly in the face, because he was chaste and feared God, and had nothing to dread. How is it that within the walls of your pleasant monastery, or the house of your Order, you are often so discontented, so morose? Is it because there is something wrong about you, in however slight a degree, in regard to the subject of the two first points of this meditation?

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON IDLE AND USELESS THOUGHTS AS A HINDRANCE TO MEDITATING WITH PROFIT.

If in the previous meditations it has been made plain to you that it is the Holy Ghost alone who helps you to pray—who helps you, that is, to engage in mental prayer, proceed to-day to consider a further obstacle to making your meditation with profit. Not only is it true that the sun of the divine mysteries cannot be mirrored in the quagmire of love of the world, it is also true that it cannot be properly reflected from the ruffled surface of a lake that is agitated by the wind. A lake thus agitated is no inappropriate image of the soul in which, while it is en-

gaged in mental prayer, those “thoughts without understanding” continually come and go, which are spoken of in the Book of Wisdom, where it is said: “The Holy Spirit of discipline will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding.” (Wisd. i. 5.)

Now such thoughts are:

1st. All sinful thoughts. Sinful thoughts are “without understanding,” because they are all opposed to the aim of true, divine reason, and all more or less have an aim that is “without understanding.” They are not sparks of light, emitted by Faith, the luminary alone true and therefore alone in accordance with reason, but from the wild fire of unreasoning passions, the heat of which is directly opposed to the fire of the Holy Ghost. Hence you will perceive that this sacred fire will burn low, and gradually die out, as soon as you allow sinful thoughts to intrude upon you during your meditations. Be on your guard against such thoughts! Do not set your mind at rest too easily concerning them, by alleging that as they come without your will, they involve no sin on your part, but rather consider this: It is possible that you do not entice the gnats and wasps, which annoy you so much, into your room, but why do you leave the windows and doors open to afford them ingress, or why do you place at the window sweet things likely to attract them? You do not wish to have sinful thoughts, you bewail the distractions they cause to you in your meditation, but why then do you leave the windows of your soul open, why do you not control your eyes, your ears, why do you by indulging in idle talk invite these evil thoughts to come as you might flies with sugar? Thoughts without understanding are in the second place:

2d. All ordinary, futile thoughts, thoughts by which certainly no harm is intended, but which as a rule have no object at all, and this is in itself contrary to reason. They are those castles in the air, phantoms of the imagination, which, when the soul is engaged in mental prayer, divert it from its actual aim, as flickering will-o'-the-wisps cause the traveller to deviate from the right road. They

are also those timid thoughts and scruples which entice the soul away from the genial, warmth-giving fire of the Holy Ghost, and detain it in a bleak, sterile desert of harassing fancies and doubts until the time of meditation—needless to say a fruitless time—is at an end. Ask yourself seriously how it is with you in this respect, and then consider,

3d. The means to be employed against such thoughts.

a. Above all things avoid real or what is called busy idleness. As weeds and toadstools and poisonous fungi flourish luxuriantly upon a damp soil, so bad and useless thoughts abound most in the minds of those who lead an idle life.

b. A celebrated man once said: What we eat makes us what we are. See therefore that, in addition to the daily meditations, you provide your mind, your memory, your imagination with wholesome nourishment relating to God and divine things, and you will find you are not as much troubled by distractions during your meditations.

c. Never engage in mental prayer without preparation, and often cry to God: O God, renew a right spirit within me! Take not away Thy Holy Spirit from me!

Finally, bear constantly in mind that it is a shame for people in the world to fritter away the hours of the day in idleness or in useless frivolities; how much more is it a shame for Priests and Religious to trifle away and lose the precious hours when the soul holds converse with God, by indulging in thoughts that are vain, useless and even reprehensible!

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON VENIAL SIN AS A HINDRANCE TO PROFITABLE MEDITATION.

How grand and delightful it is to stand on a high mountain and enjoy the pleasure of looking out on the magnificent prospect, of drinking in all the charm of the splen-

did landscape which can be seen from that height. But unfortunately gloomy mists or fogs too often interfere sadly with the beauteous view, even if they do not conceal it altogether. Now when you make your meditation, my soul, you ascend in like manner to the top of an eminence, in order to gaze upon the image of the Godhead, on His eternal beauty, or to study the divine mysteries which are proposed to you for your meditation. And the fogs which so often intrude themselves upon the scene, and spoil the view, are the venial sins you have committed. In order to recognize how serious an impediment they are to making a good meditation, consider:

1st. Venial sins obscure the clear mirror of your soul. St. Leo (Pope) compares them to dust. Just as a mirror, if covered with dust, reflects your countenance very imperfectly, in like manner a soul upon which the dust of venial sin has accumulated, cannot properly reflect the divine mystery which forms the subject of her contemplation, and the more thickly that soul is coated with the dust of venial sin, the more faulty will be the reflection from her surface. The saints were well aware of this truth, and consequently they were as careful to avoid venial sin as if it had been a fire, which might singe their wings, whereon they rose to the contemplation of divine things. St. Magdalen of Pazzi said plainly that she would rather endure all possible tortures that the executioners could inflict upon her on earth than transgress the Rule of her Order in one of its slightest regulations. And in fact, my soul, has not your own experience taught you that on the day when you have been less exact in the observance of your Rule, the day whereon you have fallen into most faults, you have made your meditation less well than usually? The more venial faults before meditation, the fewer good thoughts during meditation.

2d. Venial sin clouds the light of the understanding, i.e., the higher powers of the intellect, which, enlightened by faith and by grace, must be brought into play during meditation. The more dimly the light of grace burns within your soul—and venial sin has the effect of obscur-

ing it—the less light does it cast upon your understanding. Do not say: what can this one sin matter, it is so very slight. Do you not know that the least tiny grain of dust in your eye may obstruct its sight? Consider, moreover, that in mental prayer you fix the eye of your soul on the dazzling sun of the Godhead, you gaze upon the celestial ocean of light of the divine mysteries. Now for this a clear, undimmed vision, an eagle eye is needed, for the eye that is inflamed by the presence of the minutest grain of the dust of venial sin will scarcely be capable of the task.

3d. Consider finally that venial sin diminishes the strength of the soul. There is much that is sublime about mental prayer, but also much that is difficult. To rise from the earth to which our soul is bound by a thousand cords, and soar aloft to the throne of God; to spring up from the ground, to which, as the Psalmist is heard to complain, the soul cleaves, and ascend to heaven, there to immerse one's spirit in the depths of the divine mysteries, requires all the powers of the soul in undiminished force. Now, as St. Bonaventure says, it is precisely venial sin which weakens the spiritual strength, which lessens, as the Church teaches us, sanctifying grace within the soul, and consequently enfeebles the life and forces of the soul. Hence you will have no difficulty in perceiving how formidable an impediment it is in the way of making a good meditation.

And if, at the close of this meditation, my soul, you ask yourself sorrowfully: Since I find it so hard to free myself from venial sins, what am I to do to render them less of a hindrance to making my meditation well? The answer is simple: Cleanse your soul before each meditation in the water of sincere contrition, and you will find you have got rid of the hindrance.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE NECESSITY FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD AS THE MEANS OF OUR REDEMPTION.

It may be asked by some whether it was a matter of indispensable necessity for our redemption that Christ should become man; whether, had God so permitted, an angel or even a man of eminent sanctity could not have effected our redemption. St. Augustine declares that while on the one hand it would have been possible for divine Wisdom to redeem mankind in some other manner than the one whereby it was actually redeemed, yet, on the other hand, it is more in harmony with divine justice that the Redeemer should be the Son of God. In order to apprehend the full meaning of this dictum of the great Father of the Church, consider:

1st. The infinite greatness, the awful majesty, the incomprehensible sublimity of God. Let your imagination picture to you the Supreme Deity at the moment when He called creation into being, or when at His word the worlds He created will all be dashed to pieces; or when He will come upon the clouds of Heaven, to judge the living and the dead. And when your soul is overwhelmed with salutary fear at the sight of the awful majesty of God, then proceed to consider: that the more exalted the person who is offended, the more heinous is the offence in itself, and consequently more is required to atone for it. Now since the majesty of God, which man has offended, is infinite in dignity, justice naturally demands that the individual who shall make satisfaction to the infinite and almighty God for the offence committed, should likewise be infinite in dignity. For instance, would it not be a fresh insult if a nation, which had grievously offended against its monarch, should depute a criminal condemned to death or to penal servitude, or even one of the king's most upright servants, to make satisfaction to the royal

master whose wrath it had incurred? Now, what are we mortals in the sight of God but criminals under sentence of death? What are even the best of men, the very angels themselves, but His servants? And even were they more than this, they would still be finite creatures. The most exalted cherubim, who stand nearest to God's throne, radiant as the bright morning star, do not possess the infinite dignity which strict justice requires in a Redeemer. Thus it was absolutely necessary that one of the three divine Persons, who alone are infinite, should stoop to take upon Himself the nature of man, in order in that condition of infinite abasement to appease the offended majesty of God by an atonement that was infinite in character.

2d. Consider a further reason why the incarnation of the Son of God was indispensable. St. Paul gives it us in these words: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (I. Cor. iv. 7.) Supposing that God had consented to allow an angel or a saint to offer satisfaction to Him, wherewith would the debt have been paid? What a creature is, he is through God; what he has, he has received from God; nay, had a man given up his life, or an angel his eternal felicity, God would receive nothing that was not already His own. A bondsman who has stolen a sum of money from his master and squandered it, cannot make reparation for the theft, since he has nothing of his own, nothing but what belongs to his lord. So an angel or a man could not make satisfaction to his divine Master, for they are one and all His bonds-men. But what the servant cannot do the son can do, for he is, as the Apostle says, a free man; and thus the Son of God made man paid the debt which we could not have discharged to all eternity.

3d. And now, my soul, consider this: Of all the millions of mankind who ever have lived or will yet live on this earth, not one is competent to make atonement to God for our guilt, to pay our debt; not even the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs, not the Queen of all Saints herself, the ever-blessed Virgin Mary. And if you raise your

eyes to Heaven, you will there behold the holy angels standing around the throne of God, innumerable as the stars of the firmament above, decked with light and splendor such as your feeble sight could not bear to look upon. And yet, were you to search through all the heavens, you would not find among the mighty princes of those celestial realms, amongst the thrones and virtues, one who could have redeemed you. Only one single individual possessed the power to pay your debt—the Son of God. What therefore ought now to fill you with most amazement? The love of God and the terrible guilt of sin. What ought to inflame your heart most ardently to-day? Love for the Redeemer who for your sake became man, and detestation of the awful evil of sin.

Listen, my soul: since your Redeemer discharged for you the vast debt due to sin, in gratitude to Him forgive your brother the trifling debt he owes to you, by reason of some slight offence, some thoughtless word whereby he has wronged you.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE GREATER GLORY WHICH ACCRUED TO GOD THE SON
THROUGH HIS HAVING CHOSEN TO REDEEM US UNDER
THE FORM OF A CHILD OF ADAM.

What more pitiable object is there than a new-born infant? And can you, my soul, contemplate the almighty Son of God under this miserable form, lying in the crib at Bethlehem, without profound emotion? Well may the sight of the Son of God clothed in the garb of fallen man touch you deeply, for it is precisely under this appearance that the wisdom, the self-abnegation, the self-sacrificing charity of the Son of God shine forth with greatest brightness.

1st. Consider how the Redeemer took upon Himself the form of man in order that He might not strive with

Satan in all the panoply of His irresistible omnipotence, but in all the weakness pertaining to human nature; and for this reason: that Satan might not be able to complain of the former as being too powerful for him to contend against, and also that, he being conquered by the latter, his defeat might be all the more ignominious. O haughty Spirit of darkness, so proud, and yet so poor a creature! Thou wast completely deceived by the all-wise humility of the Son of God made man. Thou wast like the foolish fish, which snaps with avidity at the tempting bait, and is consequently caught and held fast by the hook concealed beneath the tempting morsel. For thus Satan, deceived by the human form our Lord had assumed, sought with hellish eagerness, through the death of the cross, which he strained every nerve to bring about, to swallow up, as it were, and destroy His sacred humanity; but he was caught and subjugated by the Godhead hidden under the form of mortal man, and in this manner, the fraud he had practised upon the first Adam was avenged upon him by the second Adam.

2d. Consider how the Son of God does not act like a monarch who, when his subjects are attacked by the enemy, remains comfortably at home in the splendor of his palace, enjoying every luxury; on the contrary, He goes out to give battle in His own person; over the regal robe of His divinity, He dons the armor of that humanity against which Satan wages war, and Himself enduring hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and various other hardships with and for His people, He fights like one of themselves against the enemy, with the purpose of delivering them out of his power. Does not the glory of Christ shine forth in the self-sacrifice, the renunciation manifested by the assumption of a human form, with incomparably more grandeur and beauty than would have been the case had He—humanly speaking—only hurled deadly thunderbolts from His celestial throne against the malignant foe?

3d. Consider finally how, in becoming man, the Son of God far surpassed in self-sacrificing charity the Athenian

king Codrus, of whom history relates that, having been informed by an oracle that victory would be on the side of that people whose king should fall in battle, when war broke out, he put off his royal apparel, and arraying himself in the garb of a common soldier, and in this disguise fighting in the foremost ranks, sought and found death for the salvation of his subjects. Now our King, on becoming man, did not leave an earthly, but a heavenly throne; He did not merely exchange the garments of the great for those of the lowly; but He whose nature was divine stooped to assume the form of mortal man, and in the garb of mortality He suffered death for the sake of His subjects. And not indeed for the sake of loyal subjects, enthusiastically attached to their sovereign, who followed Him to battle, but for a people who were guilty of disobedience to their heavenly King, who hated His rule, who had openly rebelled and taken up arms against Him. O amazing, incomprehensible charity!

What return, my soul, will you make for this charity? Behold how our Lord, in His incarnation, voluntarily imposes upon Himself these bitter privations, not because it was indispensable that He should do so, but because it appeared more in accordance with His divine dignity, more commensurate with His boundless love. And yet you often shun slight mortifications and acts of renunciation, you are reluctant to forego pleasures, amusements, society, etc., which it is not actually incumbent upon you to give up, but the renouncing of which would be more befitting to your profession as a Priest or a Religious.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST AS ENHANCING THE GRACE OF REDEMPTION.

Unquestionably certain as it is that God, had He so chosen, could have adopted various other ways and means of effecting our redemption, it would be impossible to

conceive a method of redemption more beautiful, more touching, more rich in graces and blessings than that of the incarnation of our Lord. Now to-day, in order to make it evident to you, my soul, that it is precisely the incarnation of Christ that confers on our redemption a deeply affecting character and makes it appear to us peculiarly salutary and abounding in grace, represent to yourself our poor humanity before the coming of Christ, under the image of a sick man, covered with wounds and festering sores, and earnestly desirous to be cured. Then consider:

1st. How much it adds to the moral and physical relief of the sufferer if the skilful physician whom he calls in to his aid does not content himself with sending his assistant, but comes himself to diagnose the case in person, and bind up the wounds. How pleased the patient is to observe that the physician shows no disgust at the sickening effluvium of the sores, but lays on the healing plaster with his own hand! Thus the heavenly Physician, the God made man, acted towards mankind sick unto death. He Himself lived upon earth in the form of man in order to heal the wounds sin had made, to cleanse them with His own blood, to restore health to souls infected with the deadly malady of sin. In how much more beauteous, more glorious a light does the grace of redemption appear in consequence of the incarnation of the celestial Physician!

2d. Consider how it cheers a sick man or an unhappy prisoner, what consolation it affords him both in heart and mind, if his master or—if we may venture to dream of such an honor—his king comes to visit him. It is recorded to the credit of Alexander the Great, that on one occasion he took the frontlet from his own imperial brow to bind up the wounds of one of his soldiers, and it may be imagined how much this condescension on the part of his monarch cheered and encouraged the wounded warrior. But the King of Heaven acted more nobly and generously, since He, having become man, did not merely visit mankind in its sickness, He did not merely bind up its wounds

with the bandages of His divine compassion, but of His own free will He laid aside His royal diadem, and in its place wore a crown of thorns for our sake. Now does not the grace of redemption on this account acquire an added lustre, a heightened charm through the incarnation of Christ, without which it would perhaps have been simply an act of divine clemency—one however which could never be sufficiently appreciated—on the part of the great King enthroned for evermore in the majesty of His celestial kingdom?

3d. Consider how the object of the redemption was not only to deliver man from the servitude of sin, but also to lead him to the practice of virtue and perfection, and this latter benefit and blessing of redemption was, like all the rest, brought about in the best and noblest manner by the incarnation of our Lord. For the very virtues which redeemed man is required constantly to practise, the very perfection after which he ought continually to strive, are nowhere to be seen in such beauty and resplendency as in the incarnate Saviour. He went before us to be for us a bright example, a shining model; from Him the holy martyrs learnt their thirst for suffering, the saintly monks and anchorites learnt their fervor in prayer, their love of poverty, the virgins learnt their spotless purity, the penitents their spirit of mortification. Thus we see that, in this respect also, through the incarnation the blessing of redemption becomes a source of greater glory to Christ, more salutary and profitable for ourselves.

My soul, you have already been meditating for some time upon this one sacred mystery of the incarnation of our Lord, and evermore you discover in it fresh beauty, fresh marvels of divine wisdom and charity. Learn from this to prize most highly the possession of the Faith, incomparable in beauty and in excellency, and in gratitude for this gift bear willingly the privations of this season of Advent; offer them up for all those unhappy persons for whom this beneficent sun has not risen, who have not the light of Faith.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

THROUGH THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST THE FERVOR OF MAN'S LOVE FOR GOD REACHES ITS HIGHEST PITCH ON EARTH, AND THE DEGREE OF GLORY THAT MAN CAN ENJOY IN HEAVEN ATTAINS ITS UTMOST LIMIT.

Like a traveller who, having traversed a fine tract of country, stands still when he finds himself on its boundary, and casts one more look on the fair scene behind him, so we will fix the eye of our mind once more in meditation on the wondrously beautiful mystery of our Lord's incarnation, and observe two more bright lights that appertain to it.

1st. Consider how through the incarnation of Christ the love man bears to God while on earth is kindled anew and fanned into a brighter flame. In order to understand this, represent to yourself two nations, one whose monarch is a native of the country, residing in it, and speaking its language, and another, the ruler of which belongs to another race, lives in a foreign land, and never allows himself to be seen by his subjects. Then ask yourself, which of these two sovereigns—all other circumstances being the same—will necessarily be most beloved by his subjects. The first, unquestionably. Now although from the beginning of creation God is the King and Lord of all His creatures, yet He was, so to speak, one of another race, invisible moreover, and incomprehensible, in His divine nature far removed from human sight or human ken; hence it came to pass that under the Old Dispensation mankind had but little love for and attachment to Him. Even the Jews, the chosen people of God, could only be restrained by fear and menaces from falling away like the other nations from the worship of the true God and obedience to His laws, and giving themselves up to the most degrading idolatry. But when this same God by His incarnation took upon Him our nature, He became one of ourselves,

we had our King in the midst of us, our eyes beheld Him; what wonder then that from that time forward the love for this King, no longer unseen, was kindled anew in the hearts of His Christian people, and reached its climax in the saints. Alas! that any should still remain cold under such circumstances! For if it was a sacred duty to love God the Father as being our Creator, when He was comparatively unknown to men, unseen by them, reigning on high enthroned in the celestial courts, how much more is this incumbent on us now, since this invisible King has been made visible to us, since He, as the incarnate goodness and kindness of God towards men, appeared on earth amongst us in person.

2d. Consider how through the incarnation of Christ the glory reserved for us in Heaven reaches its highest degree. For it is not enough that the souls of the elect should enjoy the highest felicity in the beatific vision of the God-head; their bodies also, in consequence of the incarnation of Christ, participate in the benefits resulting from it; they have an object corresponding to their own nature which affords them supreme happiness, and that is the sacred humanity of Christ, in the contemplation of which the glorified body will find more consolation, joy and delight than in the contemplation of all or any of the other saints. Oh, if it is a source of unspeakable bliss to the angels to gaze upon the infinite Deity, what happiness must it not be for man to behold his human nature united to the divine nature in inexpressible splendor in Christ! Was not St. Augustine right when he asserted that man would willingly, if it were necessary, endure the scorching flames of hell for a lengthened period, in order to be admitted to look upon Christ in His glory?

And now, my soul, if for awhile you take leave of this wondrous mystery of the incarnation of Christ, which has hitherto been the theme of your meditations, do not omit, this very day, before passing onward, to ask yourself what means you will employ in order, while devoting your attention to other sacred mysteries, to revert in thought from time to time to this mystery, so rich in graces; at any

rate see that you take the resolution to let your mind dwell with greater gratitude, with greater love than heretofore on the incarnation of our Lord every time that you repeat the Angelus.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE THOROUGH AND DILIGENT EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

When the messengers sent by the high priests, as we read in the Gospel of to-day, asked John the Baptist the question: "Who art thou?" imagine that you see before you your Eternal Judge in that awful moment when your unhappy soul, just released from the body, stands naked and trembling before God, whose searching eye penetrates the heart and reins, and who will then address to you the eventful question: "Who art thou?" What will your answer be? It will be all the better for you, the more often, the more searchingly during your lifetime you have asked yourself this question in your examination of conscience. You ought daily thus to examine your conscience, for only consider:

1st. When the Eternal Judge puts this question to you, "Who art thou?" you will be forced to return a true answer, and this answer will seal your fate for all eternity. But if you of your own accord, whilst looking into your own heart, apply this question to yourself, your destiny is still in your own hand, and if answered truthfully it may prove the means of your salvation, if you amend your life. Up then, O my soul! let your own conscience speak, before the voice of the terrible Judge is heard. Do not confine yourself to searching out the grosser faults, those that cannot fail to strike the eye, but extend your scrutiny, which is far more important, to how you have fulfilled the duties of your calling and office, what thoughts and desires lie hidden in the depths of your heart, what have been the intentions actuating your good actions, and especially

what use you have made of the talent given into your keeping—the Religious state—whether you have not kept it wrapped up in a napkin like the servant who on that account—and mark it well, only on that account, because he had not traded with it—was condemned to eternal punishment. And when you are clear on this point, consider:

2d. That as there scarcely exists a greater bodily affliction than blindness, so there scarcely exists any mental affliction greater than spiritual blindness, the want of self-knowledge. On this account the saints often exclaimed with St. Augustine: “Lord, grant me to know myself.” Now this self-knowledge can only be attained by strict, assiduous self-examination. What a melancholy impression it makes on one to see consumptive patients, in the last stage of that dire disease, imagining that there is nothing much the matter with them, and forming all manner of plans as to what they will do in the future. All those who through neglect of examination of conscience are ignorant of the state of their souls may be said to be spiritually consumptive. Woe betide them when that appalling question is heard from the Judge’s lips: “Who art thou?” and the disembodied spirit suddenly becomes aware of its hideous deformity, of which until then it had no suspicion. Take heed to avert so terrible a fate from yourself by careful examination of your conscience.

3d. Consider finally how a certain pious monk, much given to prayer, fasting and solitude, by name Stephen, when he lay on his deathbed, and the sins of his past life recurred to his memory, found solace and tranquillization of mind in the thought of the penitential tears, the flagellations and other works of penance wherewith he had atoned for them. But as he stood on the threshold of eternity, his conscience, rendered doubly acute at that moment, suddenly accused him of a fault which during his lifetime he had not recognized as a sin, and in accents of grief he exclaimed: “Alas! that is true, and what can I say for it? I have nothing to answer. But with God there is mercy.” Oh, ponder this well! if it happened that this pious man, of saintly life, so scrupulous in the examina-

tion of his conscience, quite forgot one of his past sins, how many faults will you overlook, who so frequently omit your examination of conscience for some trivial excuse, or do not leave time for it, and therefore hurry over it? And if that excellent Religious ventured to console himself with the thought of God's mercy, because with that exception he had always examined his conscience with the utmost zeal, can you, O careless servant, comfort yourself with the same reflection? Wherefore, my soul, from henceforth ask yourself daily when you examine your conscience: "Who art thou?" And if you are ever inclined to grow negligent over this most important duty, remember that heaven or hell, your whole eternal destiny, depends upon the answer to this one question: "Who art thou?"

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

Place yourself in imagination, my soul, in the blessed and happy conditions that prevailed in the earthly paradise before original sin existed, when our first parents walked with God in Eden in a state of perfect innocence, and the earth, not as yet laid under a curse, yielded its fairest fruits spontaneously and plentifully. Then proceed to consider:

1st. What original sin has brought about. Consider how this sin on Adam's part, which has been handed down as an heirloom to all his posterity, completely altered at one stroke all the conditions of this happy life in paradise. Man, God's favored child, became God's enemy; created for immortality, he became subject to death. Destined for heaven, he became ripe for hell. Think furthermore how the earth too was cursed for the sake of this sin, so that thorns and thistles sprang up everywhere in profusion, the plants became poisonous to him, the brute beasts began to

thirst for his blood. Think of all the misery that has prevailed, and still prevails upon earth ever since that sin was committed, and you will see from the terrible chastisement it entailed how hateful it was in the sight of God, and also what a sad burden it is to have a sin which God so hates weighing upon one. Alas! the guilt of that sin once rested upon you, and it yet rests upon thousands of your fellow-creatures. What feelings ought not these thoughts to awaken in you!

2d. Consider that it is by no means unjust that Adam's sin should become the inheritance of his descendants. If a man strike a mortal blow with his right hand, it is not that hand only that is punished for the deed, but the whole man. The other members of the body are, it is true, guiltless, yet they all suffer for the criminal act, as being fellow-members of the one by which it was perpetrated. Just the same if, in a town or community, the principal citizens or members rebel against their ruler in the name of all the others, not only are the leading men arrested, but the whole town is made to suffer, by being deprived of its liberties and privileges, and those who come after, although not in the least to blame for the revolt of their forefathers, yet have to bear the penalty of what was done before their birth. Now if you see the justice of this rule, and acknowledge that no sensible person would think of contesting it, you will no longer see anything unfair in the law whereby original sin, the sin of Adam, our first parent, the head of the human race, is made the inheritance of every member of the vast body of mankind. But in order to make this still clearer, proceed to consider:

3d. If parents squander their wealth, or any property of importance belonging to them, their children—perhaps as yet unborn,—have to expiate their extravagance by a life of poverty and abjection, whereas had it not been for their parents' fault, they would have lived in easy circumstances and been treated with respect. Now with regard to our first parents, Adam and Eve, the case is analogous; by their sin they squandered all their celestial treasures, the riches of grace, the gift of original justice, and were in

consequence driven out of paradise, and reduced to the utmost poverty and destitution. And we, their heirs and descendants, inherit the guilt and misery of our progenitors just in the same way that we should without any merit of our own have inherited their rich treasures of grace, provided they had, by observing the commandments of God, been, so to speak, more provident of those treasures.

If, my soul, this meditation has made apparent to you both the heinousness of Adam's sin, and also that the transmission of that guilt to his descendants is in conformity to a natural law, oh then, whenever your eyes rest on the baptismal font or you witness the administration of the sacrament of regeneration, give thanks to your God for having delivered you from this guilt by no merit of your own, and say some prayers, and offer some works of penance for the unhappy children who are in danger of passing into eternity with the awful burden of original sin still weighing upon them.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

WE OUGHT NOT TO IMPUTE TOO MUCH BLAME TO ADAM.

It is a very ordinary thing for us, children of Adam, seeing the terrible misery which original sin has brought upon the earth, to feel unduly indignant with the father of the human race. Yet we have far more reason to blame ourselves than to blame Adam. For picture to yourself our first parent, burdened with the weight of years, worn with care and sorrow, continuing to the end of his days to till the ground in the sweat of his brow, and perform the arduous work of each day in the spirit of penance, without murmuring or complaint, and then consider:

1st. Adam only committed one mortal sin, but for that one sin he did penance all his life long. For full 930 years he eat his bread moistened with tears, in the sweat of his

brow, and patiently bowed his neck under the heavy cross which the Lord laid upon his shoulders as a penance, beginning from the murder of his beloved son Abel and ending only with his own death. And you, who complain of Adam, perhaps can scarcely reckon the number of your grievous sins, and how infinitesimally small is your penance in comparison with his! Adam did penance for nine hundred and thirty years, and you consider it a great thing to do penance for a few months or even days, and that penance is often ridiculously light. O my soul, look at the number of your sins and the small amount of your penitential works, and you will cease to blame Adam so severely.

2d. Consider that Adam was only warned against sin once, when God told him that if he eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he should die the death. But you, who are so ready to blame Adam, have been warned a hundred, a thousand times over against sin. Sin itself is a warning to you, for you see daily how hideous it is, what evils it brings on us; now Adam had no opportunity of seeing all that. Not only does God the Father warn you against falling into sin, but God the Son does so likewise in His holy Gospel, the Holy Spirit by His divine inspirations, the apostles and their successors by their preaching; nay, you even have an angel specially your own, who warns and admonishes you; yet Adam, warned but once, sinned but once, whereas you, warned as you are a thousand times, also sin a thousand times. Leave off, then, complaining of Adam's guilt; had you been in his place, oh how far greater would have been the misery your wilfulness would have brought on mankind!

3d. Consider how infinitely more abundant in mercy must the incarnation of Christ now appear to you. Even if all mankind had, like Adam, performed the most severe penance on account of sin for a thousand years and more, they could not thereby have earned the grace of redemption. Now, however, far from imitating Adam's penance, his posterity lived in the past and still live in the present, as if they had not lost their primeval innocence; and yet

God had compassion upon these careless, impenitent sinners, and became man in order to deliver them from the guilt of original sin. Meditate upon this, my soul, and then in conclusion consider this besides: It may perhaps hitherto never have occurred to you to imitate Adam (whose feast is celebrated at the close of Advent as that of one of the Church's holy penitents) in what he did that was laudable. Then begin now! Be during this Advent-tide not a sinful but a penitent child of Adam, and make a firm resolution from this day forth not merely to perform the penances prescribed by the Rule, but also to practise such mortifications and penitential exercises as are not obligatory; so that you may be able on the day when our first parent is commemorated by the Church, to offer them as an evening sacrifice, well pleasing to God, at the crib of the Infant Saviour born on that self-same night.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE REASONS WHY GOD DELAYED SO LONG TO EXECUTE THE DECREE OF THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Place before yourself to-day, my soul, the infinite wisdom of Almighty God, as you behold it in the creation, the government of the universe, and perhaps also in the guidance of your own life; and your unhesitating answer to the question why the decree of the incarnation was not carried out for so long a time will be this: Because divine Wisdom judged that time to be the best. Now in order that this display of the divine Wisdom manifested in the postponement of our Lord's incarnation may prove a source of edification to you, consider:

1st. What a difficult task it was for the incarnate Saviour to induce the Jews to believe in Him. Yet these Jews had for thousands of years looked for the promised Messias, for thousands of years they had prophecies innumerable and countless types all pointing to the coming

of the Son of God made man; and if in spite of all this they had such difficulty in believing in Him, if a large majority remained obdurate in their unbelief, how would it have been if God had taken upon Himself the nature of man, without that long interval of prediction and preparation for mankind?

2d. Consider how slow all the rest of the world were to believe in the Son of God made man, although at the period of His advent the world was in a state of indescribable wretchedness, and precisely at that time wickedness and vice had reached their climax. The danger of eternal perdition for the generality of mankind was greater, the longing of the just for a Redeemer was more intense then than it had ever been before. And if in spite of this, our Lord and His apostles had to open a way for faith in the incarnate Saviour at the cost of their lives and the shedding of their blood, how would it have been if Christ had been born as man into the world sooner, before the world had become awake to a sense of its own deplorable misery, before sin had reached its highest point of guilt? The unspeakable benefit and mercy of our Lord's incarnation, the indispensable necessity for Him to assume the nature of man, the need of a Redeemer, all this would have been utterly incomprehensible to mankind.

3d. Consider further: If we look at the world in our own day we see the coldness and indifference with which the fact of our Lord's incarnation, that supreme work of grace, is regarded. Only a small number are penetrated with a deep sense of the grand, the important nature of that marvellous event. From the minds of a vast proportion of mankind the very remembrance of it seems to be obliterated. What can we imagine would have been the coldness, the indifference, the culpable oblivion, if this event had taken place at an earlier stage in the world's history, if it had occurred not nineteen hundred, but five thousand years ago?

From to-day's meditation learn, my soul, humbly to adore the divine Wisdom. And if you earnestly desire the removal of some evil, release from some irksome post, or

whatever it may be, and God does not presently grant your request, await His good pleasure in all tranquillity. Divine Wisdom knows best what moment is the most advantageous time for you, as He knew best what was the most suitable epoch for the incarnation of the Son of God.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE CONSENT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY GAVE TO THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD.

The subject of this meditation may perhaps surprise you, and cause you to ask yourself in amazement: Can it be that the consent of an insignificant mortal was requisite for the fulfilment of the divine decree? Yes, my soul, it is true; so far did God go in His wondrous condescension, that even in a matter so great and exalted, one in which the salvation of the whole of mankind was concerned, He respected man's free will, in order that as it was by the exercise of man's free will that the curse of original sin came upon the human race, so also by the exercise of his free will the blessing of redemption should be brought within our reach. Endeavor to place before yourself, my soul, that important moment, the most important of all others since the world was made, when the Archangel Gabriel had announced the celestial tidings to the Blessed Virgin; and consider:

1st. How the angel, having executed the commission given him by God, and delivered his message to the Blessed Virgin, waited for her reply. But it is not Gabriel alone who thus waits, as St. Bernard remarks, for Mary to give her consent, to intimate her readiness to become the Mother of the Son of God; the most Holy Trinity in the heavens above is also waiting, the angelic choirs in the realms of bliss, the holy patriarchs in Limbo are likewise waiting; nay, more—the saint continues—“the whole world, O Virgin, lies prostrate at thy feet, awaiting, ex-

pecting a favorable answer, and not without reason, for all our solace, all our hope of redemption depends on thy reply."

Oh, how grand, how illustrious does the holy Virgin Mary appear at that moment when Heaven and earth are waiting in expectancy for a word of consent from her lips! When your soul is deeply impressed with a sense of her sublime dignity, proceed to consider:

2d. How after mature deliberation the exalted Virgin utters one sentence, one at which Heaven and earth rejoice, and these are her words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." (St. Luke i. 38.) O words of salvation, on which the incarnation of our Lord immediately follows! but words no less of profound humility! Only imagine, this Virgin, at whose grandeur and glory you could not sufficiently marvel under the first point of this meditation, now in all humility calls herself a handmaid of the Lord; she a handmaid, who has just been chosen to become the Mother of God—she a handmaid who but just now was elevated to the highest dignity, who was saluted even by an archangel with respect and reverence. O my soul, admire on the one hand the glory, on the other the humility of our Lady, and say to yourself: there are times when Almighty God speaks to you by your angel Guardian or by the mouth of your Superior, making known to you His will in regard to some matter, and then—for such is the Christian's dignity—He waits for you to consent. Woe betide you if in the pride of your heart you withhold that consent, instead of, like Mary, expressing your prompt and humble obedience in the words which bring salvation to the individual as they did to the whole human race: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

3d. Consider that there is yet one thing which surpasses and exceeds Mary's admirable and astonishing humility, and that is the incomprehensible condescension of Almighty God manifested in the incarnation of Christ, which took place immediately after she had given her consent. Scarcely had the words passed her lips before God

became man. He who is infinite greatness became a little child; He who is almighty became frail and weak; He whose bliss is beyond comprehension became an infant destined to endure poverty, suffering and death. Meditate attentively upon this. Read what is related of Nabuchodonosor in the book of Daniel (ch. iv. 30): "He was driven away from among men and did eat grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till his hair grew like the feathers of eagles and his nails like birds' claws." What a terrible degradation for a monarch once so great and so mighty! Yet if God had not merely made him like to the lower animals, but had actually changed him into one of the brutes, Nabuchodonosor would only have descended from a higher to a lower place in the scale of creation. Now in the incarnation of Christ the Creator Himself becomes a creature. How infinite is the distance! What unspeakable abasement on the part of your God! And you forsooth must needs resist and refuse to yield your consent if God requires something of you which perhaps involves some sacrifice of your pride? No, my soul, such shall not be your conduct. From henceforth let Mary's words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," be yours also; take them for your motto, and exclaim with St. Bernard: O most sweet Jesus! the more Thou dost abase Thyself by becoming man, the greater dost Thou show Thyself by Thy exceeding charity to me; and the more contemptible Thou dost become for my sake, so much the dearer Thou art to me.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON WHAT MARY BECAME TO US, IN CONSEQUENCE OF GIVING HER CONSENT TO THE INCARNATION.

In some of the preceding meditations you have, my soul, contemplated the baneful crop of weeds that sprung up on the earth in consequence of the disobedience of the first woman, Eve; a deadly crop of sin and vice; a crop

of tribulation and misery, of lamentation and woe, of sickness and death. From henceforward you are called upon to contemplate the glorious fruits of obedience, and to-day in particular you will meditate on the results to Mary of this obedience on her part.

1st. By uttering those words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she became the woman of whom God spoke in paradise, foretelling concerning her that she should crush the serpent's head, for immediately upon her consent being given, He who was destined to destroy the power of the devil upon earth was conceived in her virginal womb.

2d. She became the bright aurora of our salvation, the rosy glow that ushers in the day, for at her word the Sun of Justice, the only-begotten of the Father, came upon the earth to give light to its darkness, to give warmth to its coldness, to give fresh life and vigor to those who were benumbed and frost-bound by sin and idolatry.

3d. She became the little cloud, the herald of the on-coming rain, that the prophet Elias saw rising up on the horizon after a drought of more than four years' duration. For after the world had for four thousand years been dried and scorched by the keen blasts of the divine anger, and not a drop of rain nor vivifying dew of celestial grace had fallen to moisten the thirsty land, it was not until Mary expressed her compliance with the divine will that the yearning desire of the languishing nations, expressed in the expectant cry: "Drop down dew, ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just," found its fulfilment.

4th. She became a more powerful advocate with God than Queen Esther was with King Assuerus. For if Esther, by her entreaties and tears, appeased the wrath of the earthly monarch, and prevailed on him to spare one nation, the Hebrew people, Mary, by intimating her consent to the divine decree, gained the privilege of having the Son of God for her Son, and thereby appeased the anger of the King of Heaven, excited against all the nations of the earth.

O happy obedience, that brought salvation to the world,

and glory to the name of Mary! And you, my soul, bear so grudgingly the yoke that the vow of obedience lays on you! Yet ask yourself this one thing: When did an act of obedience bring you harm or disgrace? And did you ever find disobedience make you happy?

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF THE MIRACLE WROUGHT IN THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

When we meditate upon the marvellous work of divine omnipotence which was accomplished in Mary immediately after the announcement to her by the angel of God's design, are we not compelled to exclaim in amazement: Who ever heard of anything of the kind? Who ever witnessed the like of this? My soul, concentrate all your attention to-day on the contemplation of this great wonder, the incarnation of Christ that has just taken place, and consider:

1st. He who from all eternity was clothed in the majesty of the Godhead, clothes Himself with flesh and blood from the person of the Blessed Virgin. He now begins to have a mother on earth without a father, who from all eternity had a Father without a mother. He becomes a creature, who is Himself the Creator of all things. Creation now beholds—to quote the words of St. Basil—what hitherto it never saw; a child who is the father of His mother, a child who far exceeds His mother in years. And, to crown it all, this child has for His mother one who at the same time is the most inviolate of virgins. O marvel above all marvels, accomplished for our salvation!

2d. Now contemplate yet greater wonders: He comes into the world naked and destitute of covering, who clothes the fields and forests with verdure, who decks the earth with flowers and fruits and herbage. He is laid in a lowly manger, who has the Heaven for His throne and the

earth for His footstool. He utters the plaintive wail of a helpless infant, at whose voice the heavens tremble and the earth quakes. He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes, who with His finger sustains the weight of the whole world. He assumes a mortal nature, who from all eternity is immortal and immutable. O wonder of wonders! and all this was done for my sake, yes, truly for my sake!

3d. There is indeed no end to this marvel; we have by no means gauged its full depth. He has become true man, yet He has not a human personality, because His human nature is united to the divine nature. He is one person, but He has two distinct natures. God has become man without ceasing to be God. God has become man, yet His human nature is not absorbed in His divine nature. But here we must stop. One might meditate upon this one mystery, this one miracle, for the whole of a lifetime and yet not fathom its profound depths. This miracle God wrought for you. What do you do for Him? Three weeks of Advent are already past; what have you done in this time of grace for your God, who is so infinitely bountiful to you, and what do you propose to do for Him in the week that yet remains?

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY.

Represent to yourself to-day the great and forcible preacher of penance of whom the Gospel tells us: "The word of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins; as it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight; and the rough ways plain; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (St. Luke iii. 2-6.)

Imagine that the great prophet addresses these solemn words to you, and meditate upon them.

1st. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.” Thus St. John calls upon you to-day, for behold! the Lord is already very near. The hallowed, the blessed night of His birth is drawing nearer and nearer. Have you prepared the way, made straight the paths for the coming Saviour, that is to say, have you made yourself ready to meet Him? Nothing is of greater importance than the preparation here spoken of. For God will not accomplish our salvation without our co-operation; and if the approaching festival, pre-eminently a festival of grace, is to be for your salvation, it is requisite that you should have “prepared the way” beforehand. The grace which we may, which we ought to receive at Christmas may be compared to the sun, to the air, to fire. The sun is intrinsically good, so is the air, and so is fire; but only see how different is the action of the sun upon day and its action upon wax; how different is the effect the fresh air has upon the sick man and upon the healthy; how differently fire acts upon gold and upon straw, the former it refines but the latter it destroys; it soon makes dry wood blaze up brightly, while a long time is required to kindle green or damp wood, if indeed it can be got to burn at all. Therefore see, my soul, that you “prepare the way”; remove all obstacles that may impede the operation of grace; in your prayers, your mortifications, your love of solitude be impressible and soft as wax, pure as refined gold. Consider how carefully the saints prepared themselves for the great festivals, see how the apostles after our Lord’s ascension persevered continually in prayer and fasting in order to prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and do you begin from this day forth to prepare yourself in like manner for the coming of the Son of God.

2d. “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low,” thus John proceeds in the exhortation he addresses to his hearers. By the mountains, St. Chrysostom says, we are to understand the

proud and self-sufficient, whom our Lord will humiliate. Would that the approaching advent of Christ might lead you to humble yourself; that the anticipation of His coming might induce you to remove the mountain of your pride, the hill of your vanity and inordinate desire to please. Only reflect awhile, and ponder upon this truth: He who is about to come is the Son of God in His humility, as the poor lowly Infant in the manger at Bethlehem. Turn once more to the pages of history, and see if the truth is not forcibly borne in upon you, that only the humble in all ages have understood and do understand this mystery of humility, and that the graces peculiar to this mystery have ever been and still remain hidden from the haughty and arrogant. Herod, the proud monarch, is only roused to anger by the lowly Saviour's birth; far indeed from his mind is the knowledge of the salvation that has appeared to all men; the haughty Pharisees of all times look with disdain at the crib where He is laid, whereas the lowly Virgin and the simple, modest shepherds gaze enraptured on the Infant Jesus. And we know that after many centuries were past, the mere remembrance of that blessed night caused the humble Francis to be inebriated with celestial joy. Arise then, my soul, do away with "the mountains and the hills," exercise yourself in humility throughout this whole week, and in order to acquire this virtue more easily, "fill up the valley" of your heart. For the soul of the Christian is a profound abyss, full of spiritual infirmities and imperfections. Descend into that abyss, fill it up by means of self-knowledge, acknowledge your sins and shortcomings, and you will soon become more humble; in fact it is not necessary to investigate your moral imperfections for the purpose of putting pride to flight; it is quite enough to recall to mind your natural defects and worthlessness. St. Gregory says that the remembrance of our own vileness is the surest guardian of humility; and St. Bernard admonishes us to bear three things ever in mind: What wert thou? Nothing. What art thou? A vessel full of uncleanness. What shalt thou be? The food of worms.

3d. “The crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain.” These words contain a further admonition from the lips of the preacher of the desert, as to how we ought to prepare the way for the Lord who is to come. The rough ways, says St. Gregory, will be levelled and made plain, when hearts that are harsh and irascible become, through the influence of divine grace, calm, meek and gentle. For it is as the goodness and kindness of God unto men that Jesus will appear amongst us; He will come, sent by the charity of the Father; He will come, impelled by the love of us poor mortals; He will come for the purpose of giving unto men “a new commandment, that they love one another.” (St. John xiii. 34.) If therefore you consider this, if you make the motive and the object of our Lord’s advent the subject of your meditation, you cannot fail to see clearly that you ought to make the rough ways plain in order to prepare the way for Him who is to come. You cannot presume to stand beside the manger wherein divine Love is laid, if your heart is full of unkind, quarrelsome, angry feelings; and never can you promise yourself to celebrate the feast with a rich harvest of graces for yourself, unless you practise more perfectly than you have done heretofore the virtue of “brotherly love” so earnestly and so frequently enjoined upon us by the Seraphic Francis.

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE VISITATION OF OUR LADY.

Imagine, my soul, that you see before you the most holy Virgin, going in haste over the hill country of Judea, in holy solitude, bearing within her Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb. And when you have placed vividly before your mind the form of that Blessed Virgin proceeding on her way quietly and collectedly, with no other companion than Christ, then consider:

1st. That as soon as the stupendous miracle of the in-

carnation of our Lord was accomplished in her and she had become a tabernacle of the living God, Mary's great desire is to escape from the busy world, from the conversation of men; she will not remain amid the noise and turmoil of daily life; she prefers to seek holy seclusion and solitude. There, in quiet and retirement, she wishes to await the birth of Christ, which is to bring salvation to mankind, and, associating only with the members of the household of Zachary the Priest, to ponder with loving delight on the mystery of the incarnation. And you, my soul, after Holy Communion, hurry away from the holy table to return to the tumult and turmoil of daily life, impatient again to employ the tongue whereon the God made man rested so recently, in empty and idle conversation. Mary wishes to await our Lord's birth in the tranquillity of the hill country, and is it possible that you find the enforced quiet and silence of that brief time, so rich in graces, an irksome infliction? If so, how then will you prepare yourself to celebrate the birth of Christ?

2d. Consider how Mary's arrival brought joy immediately to Zachary's house. John the Baptist, our Lord's precursor, leaps for joy in his mother's womb at the coming of Christ. Zachary receives his cousin with mute signs of pleasure; his tongue is not yet unloosed, but the sight of her inspires him with fresh hope that it may soon be so; and the pious Elizabeth above all, hear how she, filled with the Holy Ghost, exclaims in holy jubilation: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (St. Luke i. 43.) Now if Zachary's house became an abode of joy and exultation because it was privileged to afford a temporary shelter to Christ, the incarnate Saviour, how is it to be accounted for, my soul, that you derive so little happiness from the fact that your Redeemer dwells with you, that He is in your immediate vicinity in the tabernacle, that He is, so to speak, one of your household, and it is granted you to approach His holy table so frequently, perhaps several times a week, nay, if you are a Priest even to receive Him daily as your spiritual food?

3d. Consider how Mary's feelings find vent in that superb canticle of praise, the Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord;" wherein she, the simple, lowly Virgin of Nazareth, with the enthusiasm of the Royal Prophet David, with the wisdom of King Solomon, lauds and magnifies the divine gifts and graces which, by means of the blessed fruit of her womb, God conferred on her and on the whole world. Behold, my soul, how the presence of Jesus inspires, enlightens, enraptures the Blessed Virgin! Now after each Communion you carry about with you that self-same Saviour—where is your Magnificat? It was not amid the bustle and distractions of Jerusalem, it was not during the daily discharge of the duties of her calling, but in the silence and solitude of Elizabeth's house that Mary sang the Magnificat! Cultivate in yourself, my soul, the love of seclusion and silence, take delight in it especially before and after Holy Communion; then your heart, like Mary's, will overflow with the sweet praises of your God, and at the approaching Christmas festival more particularly you too will chant a joyous magnificat, if during this last week of Advent you anticipate the birth of the Saviour, as Mary did, in tranquillity and solitude.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS WHEREWITH THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN AWAITED THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD.

To-day you are called upon, my soul, once again to contemplate the Blessed Virgin engaged in prayer in the quiet chamber she occupied in the house of her cousin Elizabeth, or seated in the garden in the shade of a spreading tree, absorbed in holy meditation and reflection upon the stupendous miracle already accomplished within her by God's almighty power, and soon to be revealed to the whole world. Then consider:

1st. What must have been the feelings awakened in the

Blessed Virgin's mind when she realized the astounding fact: I am the Mother of God, and in consequence of this I am exalted not only above all mankind but even above all the angels of Heaven. Yet instead of this thought rendering her proud and haughty, she bows down immediately in profound and humble adoration before the inscrutable decree of the Most High, attributing all to His grace and extolling it alone in the beautiful words: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (St. Luke i. 49); and she knows no more ardent desire than this: to imitate the humility, the self-abasement of Him who took the form of a servant within her womb.

2d. Consider what Mary's reflections must have been at the thought: I am the Mother of the Redeemer, the Mother of Him who out of pure love to us poor mortals became incarnate within me, assuming the nature of a man for no other object than this, by means of that human nature to redeem mankind from its iniquities. Well may the heart of the Mother, whilst meditating upon the charity of her Son, have glowed with the same love and the same compassion; and the flame thus kindled has never ceased to burn, for she, the Mother of our Redeemer, is at all times and under all circumstances our merciful Advocate, the Refuge of sinners.

3d. Consider how all these lofty and holy sentiments and thoughts that filled the soul of the Blessed Virgin were summed up and comprised in those touching words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." In this character of handmaid she humbly accepts the graces of the wondrous maternity, whereby the pre-eminence above all women is given her, and at the same time she generously takes upon herself the sorrows and sufferings which, in consequence of the distinction conferred upon her, must necessarily pierce her soul like a sharp sword. And now, my soul, compare the thoughts that filled Mary's mind while carrying Christ in her womb with the sentiments and emotions that you entertain when you have received Christ into your heart; ask yourself whether, like Mary, you participate in the humility of Jesus, who for our sakes took upon Him-

self the form of a servant; whether you participate in the love of Jesus for sinners, a love which shines as brightly in the mystery of His incarnation as did the star that guided the three kings to His crib; whether, finally, you participate in His perfect submission to His Father's will, to which He was obedient from His birth in the manger until His death upon the cross.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

ON THE JOURNEY OF JOSEPH AND MARY TO THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM.

In midwinter, in the cold and inclement season, a man is seen proceeding along the road to Bethlehem, about whose appearance, poorly clad though he is, there is a singular dignity and superiority; and with him there is a young woman the expression of whose countenance is so gentle, so charming, so holy, that the travellers give one the impression of being angels rather than men; at any rate a supernatural halo seems to encircle them. In very truth they are attended by an unseen escort of angels, for the two travellers carry with them Him who is the joy of Heaven and the Saviour of men, who is about to be born into the world in Bethlehem, whither Joseph and Mary's steps are bound. And while this wondrous journey is present to your mind, let the subject of your meditation be in the first place:

1st. The self-denial and abnegation on the part of the incarnate Saviour involved in this toilsome journey. From the very outset of His earthly existence He desired to teach mankind by example, as He afterwards did by precept, that we ought to detest and avoid all that the world loves and seeks after, and on the other hand to love and seek after all that the world detests and avoids. For this reason He quits Nazareth, where He would have had a safe and comfortable place wherein to be born, and in the depth

of the winter journeys to a distant town, there to be born unknown and unbefriended, alone, without protection against the rigors of the season, with no other shelter than that of a stable. Oh, if mortification and renunciation are thus chosen by Jesus to precede His birth, you surely need no longer debate within yourself, my soul, as to what is the most fitting preparation you can make to celebrate the blessed advent of our Lord.

2d. Consider what were the causes, natural and supernatural, that gave occasion for this journey. Prompted by ostentatious pride, which led him to desire to ascertain the number of his subjects, and by the avaricious wish to insure the receipt of the full amount of tribute money and of the taxes due from them, the earthly king, by issuing a decree for a general census of the population to be taken, made it obligatory upon Joseph and Mary to repair to Bethlehem; while the King of Heaven, who can turn the hearts of earthly potentates like the streams of water, out of His love of poverty, which made Him desire to be born in the utmost destitution in a lowly stable, out of His humility, which urged Him to be born a despised and unknown stranger in a strange city, caused Joseph and Mary to undertake this perilous journey. See how widely the thoughts and designs of the Most High differ from those of men. Think, O my soul: Very soon you will stand beside the manger where your Saviour is laid: Will you stand there in the company of the haughty monarch, whose heart clings to earthly things, or will you be like your Saviour, who was impelled by the love of humility and of poverty to betake Himself to Bethlehem?

3d. Consider what must have been the feelings of Joseph and Mary on this journey. Although the distance from their home was so great, the roads so rough, the wind cutting and cold, and the reception they met with at Bethlehem so unfriendly, yet they went on their way full of joy and consolation, knowing how near the time was when the prophecy of Micheas would be fulfilled, "Thou, Bethlehem, art not the least among the princes of Juda" (Mich. v. 2); knowing that the object of their

painful journey was that event for which the whole world had been longing for four thousand years, and these thoughts sustained the travellers' courage and enabled them to proceed on their way rejoicing. The season of Advent, with its prescribed privations and mortifications, forms for us an arduous journey to the Redeemer's crib. We are very near it now. How have you, my soul, performed this journey? With resignation and gladness like Joseph and Mary? Oh, before this day is ended, bewail your frequent movements of impatience, your murmurs and complainings during this time of penance; even now, though late, let holy joy fill your heart to overflowing. Lift up your eyes and see, your Lord is already so near at hand!

(Should Christmas Eve fall later, the meditation may be used in this place which was superseded by the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.)

CHRISTMAS EVE.

ON THE ARRIVAL OF JOSEPH AND MARY IN BETHLEHEM.

Long after night had cast her curtain of darkness over the meadows around Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary were still wandering through the streets of the city of David, their royal ancestor, unable to obtain a shelter for the night. They knocked at one door after another, but always in vain. Dwell in thought, my soul, on the pitiable position of these saintly travellers, and you will feel heartfelt compassion for them; then consider:

1st. How the Queen of Heaven, on reaching Bethlehem, exhausted and worn out with fatigue, cannot find a single one of the inhabitants compassionate enough to give her the hospitality she seeks. Think how many godless, wicked persons had already obtained a comfortable lodging and good cheer in the town, whereas these two holy personages cannot find so much as a corner in which to rest their weary limbs. How true was what St. John said,

speaking of the Son of God: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (St. John i. 11.) And how early were the words fulfilled which our Lord Himself uttered later on: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." (St. Luke ix. 58.) But you, my soul, instead of burning with indignation at the conduct of the people of Bethlehem, should rather reflect with contrition and grief of heart on how often you have given room within your breast to the world, to the devil, to the evil passions of your sinful nature, and have refused entrance to Christ when He knocked so lovingly at the door of your heart, craving admittance there.

2d. Consider how much the Bethlehemites lost through their churlish behavior in turning away Joseph when he asked for shelter. Oh, how greatly are they to be pitied, those blind mortals, who knew not what a beloved, what a valued Guest they drove from their doors! How great a blessing would have rested on the house in which the Saviour of the world with His all-glorious Mother had been entertained; how richly, how generously He would have rewarded the hospitality shown Him! See, my soul, that you no longer resemble these Bethlehemites. Arise, delay not to prepare this very day a resting-place for your Redeemer; think how you can embellish it and render it a worthy abode for the Infant Christ; and when you have pondered sufficiently on this point, pour out your heart in these words of prayer: O most exalted Guest, come to me, knock at my door, do not weary of knocking, and I will open to Thee, I will set apart for Thee the best chamber in my house, my heart, that is, where Thou canst rest according to Thy good pleasure.

3d. Consider how Joseph and Mary, repulsed on all sides, submitted with supernatural patience to this humiliation, although Mary may have shed bitter tears on account of her inability to procure a resting-place for the divine Child whom she loved so tenderly.

Finally, my soul, accompany in spirit Joseph and Mary in their holy grief to the outskirts of the town, where,

under pressure of these untoward circumstances, they were compelled to take up their quarters in a half-ruined stable. There, while all the world was sunk in sleep, unconscious, unsuspicuous that anything extraordinary was happening, they awaited, in holy and devout recollection, the greatest event that ever marked the world's history. And if, my soul, you have endeavored to realize this memorable instant in that momentous night, O then keep the thought of it present to your mind all the day long; let not your occupations or the conversation of others distract you from it, but let your heart be with Joseph and Mary, watching with them in silent meditation for the birth of the Infant Jesus.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

ON THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD.

To-day, my soul, betake yourself in imagination to the manger wherein the Saviour was laid. And whilst you meditate on this subject, endeavor to realize the great and all-important moment in that hallowed night, when the cave at Bethlehem was suddenly lighted up with the radiance of the celestial glory, and Mary and Joseph knelt in devout worship before the new-born Infant Christ. Join them in spirit, kneel down beside Mary and Joseph, and gaze with reverent awe, with delicious joy, upon the adorable Infant.

1st. Consider first the sweetness, the solace, the unspeakable joy that Mary and Joseph experienced at the sight of the divine Child. With deepest reverence they, first of all the dwellers on the whole wide earth, salute the Infant Redemeer and salute Him in the name of all the human race. One can fancy how fervently they thanked Him on behalf of all the world, to whom His birth brought such immense favors and blessings; how gladly and unreservedly they offered their poor services to the divine Child. You, my soul, ought to do likewise;

the same sentiments ought to animate you to-day, when you kneel, not merely in spirit, but in reality before the Saviour's crib; I mean the tabernacle where Christ, the divine Child, actually reposes. Oh, let it be your chief delight to contemplate the Child Jesus as Mary and Joseph did, by assiduously visiting the Most Holy Sacrament, not to-day only, but every day of your life.

2d. Consider how the Blessed Virgin, overwhelmed with holy awe, hesitated long before taking the divine Child in her arms, and how at length love overcame fear, and impelled her to take up the divine Infant, to warm its tender limbs, to clasp it to her maternal bosom, to cover it with respectful kisses. What words can describe her happiness at that moment, the consolation, the joy that she felt!

Now, my soul, it is the same with you; reverence for the Infant Jesus in the tabernacle seems to hold you back from receiving Him into your heart, yet does not love, love for this same Jesus urge you to do that from which a salutary awe bids you refrain? Arise then, draw near to-day to the divine Infant, and by receiving Him in Holy Communion take Him, like Mary, into your arms. But what do I say—like Mary? Are you worthy to do as Mary did? Oh, how far you fall short of the purity, the love, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! What do you propose to do from this time forward, in order that it may be otherwise with you?

3d. Finally, fix your gaze once more on the Infant in the manger. Do not rise up from your meditation until you have impressed His image vividly upon your soul, until you have, so to speak, before your eyes the gracious, lovely Child as He lies there, so indescribably poor and yet withal so rich, so lowly and yet so exalted, suffering so much from the cold and yet imparting life and warmth to the whole world, abandoned so entirely by mankind, and yet their only hope of salvation. And then surely you will need no suggestions from any one; your own heart will already have told you what you ought to do.

DECEMBER 26TH.

ON THE ANGELS' SONG OF PRAISE.

To-day, my soul, during your meditation you are called upon to associate yourself with the shepherds of Bethlehem, and represent to your mind in vivid colors the scene at midnight, when a brilliant light suddenly broke through the darkness, and the fields around Bethlehem were resplendent with the glory that shone from Heaven, while amid the silence of night a song resounded, a song which touches your heart and brings tears to your eyes and to those of the shepherds; a song that no human ear had till then ever heard, words surpassingly beautiful and soothing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." And if this angelic canticle finds an echo in your heart, proceed to consider:

1st. The words: "Glory to God in the highest." Recall to mind how during the season of Advent you meditated on the fact that it is through the incarnation of our Lord that the greatest possible glory accrues to Almighty God; that in this auspicious event, the principal attributes of the Godhead are reflected as in a fair and wondrous rainbow; and that it is precisely on account of this mystery that the highest praise and honor is due from us to the Most High God. Yes, indeed, well may we say: Glory be to the Father, who gave His Son to us; glory be to the Son, who to-day for our sake lies in the manger; glory be to the Holy Ghost, by whose operation this miracle of grace was accomplished!

2d. Consider the words: "On earth peace." Pass in review before your mental vision all those patriarchs and holy men—a venerable yet an expectant band—who under the Old Dispensation longed ardently for the advent of the Prince of Peace, for Him who was to bring peace on earth. Now He has come, He is here with us. Peace is already concluded between the unhappy human race and the God whose wrath they kindled, for now the Heavens

are opened, angels ascend and descend, pacific relations are reestablished between Heaven and earth. Man is once more at peace with himself, for the incarnate Saviour has set the troubled conscience at rest by the remission of sins. But alas! perhaps you will say, I am a stranger to the peace here spoken of. If so, then consider in the third place:

3d. The concluding words of the angels' song, "to men of good will." Peace, the gift which the divine Child brought with Him from above, will not be bestowed on those individuals who are endowed with a good understanding or a good memory; it will not be granted to those who excel in bodily strength, who are remarkable for their personal beauty or for their noble birth; it will be given solely and exclusively to the men of good will, no matter if all else be lacking to them—intellectual superiority, distinguished beauty, a splendid physique, high position. And who is the man of good will? He who desires and asks and strives after nothing else but solely and wholly what God wills. He is a man of good will who is no less ready to drink vinegar and gall, if such be the Lord's will, than to accept with gratitude for his consolation the most costly and delicious wine, if God presents it to him; who is equally willing to have a crown of thorns pressed on to his head, as to wear a regal crown of gold, since he is actuated only in either case by the love of God. Alas, my soul, how far you fall short of being a man of good will; how far you are from being able to take as your motto the beautiful words: "What Thou willest, Lord, as Thou willest, as long as Thou willest, and because Thou willest it." How far are you from resembling St. Stephen, who was the first to make manifest his good will, that is, the complete conformity of his will to the will of God, by gladly offering to God the sacrifice of his life; who, whilst he was being stoned, repeated, in deed at least if not in word, the prayer his Lord uttered: "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Oh, see then that you pray to-day for this good will; let the resolution you make to strive to the utmost of your

power to acquire it be the first oblation you present at the crib; and renew that resolution every time that you hear the words of the angels' song of praise: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*

DECEMBER 27TH.

ON THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ANGELS AROUND THE CRIB AT BETHLEHEM.

Imagine, my soul, that the unspeakable privilege is granted you of entering the birthplace of the Redeemer on Christmas Day. In the hallowed grotto at Bethlehem a solemn silence prevails, as in a church when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. For in that grotto your Lord Himself deigns to repose; in that grotto the most holy of all the dwellers upon the earth, Mary and Joseph, are present; in that grotto a multitude of the heavenly host kneel in lowly adoration, visible only to the eye of faith, yet perhaps not unseen to Mary's purity. As St. Bonaventure says: The angels descend from Heaven above to gaze upon the countenance of their divine Master, and pay homage to His blessed Mother. Who of all those celestial beings would have been content to rest in Heaven, without going to visit their Lord in His humility and self-abasement? Contemplate those angels to-day, and consider:

1st. The angels who prostrate themselves in adoration before the crib are pure spirits, whose office is that of perpetual adoration. The all-pure, all-holy Son of God has come down to a world that is full of uncleanness; He has come to dwell amongst men whose impure actions are countless as the sand on the seashore, and cry to Heaven for vengeance. And because mankind is thus immersed in sensuality and luxury, no one, with the exception of a few just persons, counts it worth his trouble to betake himself to the crib where the Redeemer is laid; instead of men, holy angels, resplendent with the brightness of heavenly glory, surround His lowly resting-place; and

those angels St. Thomas declares to be by nature spirits of perfect purity and endowed with the gift of the most exalted holiness. Such are the spotless beings who kneel before the crib, absorbed in adoration of the Infant Jesus. O my soul, gaze with rapt attention at this beautiful, this entrancing scene, and consider well this truth: If you desire to worship worthily at the crib during the season of the Christmas festival, and throughout the whole year worthily to adore our Lord where He abides, not temporarily as in the manger at Bethlehem, but permanently in the sacred tabernacle, O then you must be pure, like these adoring angels; you must be an angel in human form. "Thou hast made him (man) a little less than the angels," the Psalmist says. (Ps. viii. 6.) With the help of God's grace it is possible for us to live in angelic purity and virginity; let the posture of our souls be, like that of the angels, one of unceasing adoration. Ask yourself seriously whether you fulfil this angelic vocation, and make special resolutions as to how you will in future conduct yourself in regard to holy purity and daily adoration.

2d. Consider, moreover, that the holy angels surround the crib for the purpose of protecting the Infant Jesus, for thus the Royal Prophet writes: "He hath given His angels charge over Thee; in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." (Ps. xc. 11.) The angels watch over the slumbering Infant to protect Him, and in all His ways they attend on Him to defend Him. An angel appeared to Joseph, to save the Child from Herod's murderous sword, bidding him: "Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee." (St. Matt. ii. 13.) Who can doubt, moreover, that an escort of angels accompanied and protected the Holy Family on their flight? You too may, and ought to play the part of such an angel, my soul. Remember that whenever you have received Holy Communion, the Infant Jesus is present in your heart as He once was in the manger. Are you, like the angels, careful to safeguard this divine Child? Are you, like them, ever on the watch, lest some evil passion,

some mortal sin, should seek, as Herod did, to destroy the life of that Child? Furthermore, if you are a Priest, do you not know that the souls confided to your charge are the brethren and sisters of Christ, and do you act as a Guardian Angel towards them, ever on the alert to prevent any Herod from taking away the life of the Infant Jesus in the hearts of the sheep and lambs of your flock? Let us to-day, standing beside the Redeemer's crib, contemplating the holy angels, form a steadfast resolution to act the part of a Guardian Angel, not only in regard to our own soul but also towards our fellow Christians, and ask ourselves whether we cannot, perhaps this very day, find an opportunity of performing such a service in imitation of the angels.

3d. Consider that St. John was an angel in human shape. Meditate attentively upon the attractive virtue of virginity in which this disciple excelled, which procured for him the privilege of leaning on Jesus' breast, and on account of which our Lord consigned His Virgin Mother to his charge. Consider how this disciple, like an adoring seraph, soared aloft as on eagles' pinions in contemplation of the most profound mysteries of the God-head, and in a holy ecstasy here on earth was allowed to behold the bliss of Heaven. Consider how this disciple, alone of all the twelve, remained faithful to the divine Saviour and did not abandon Him even when He was hanging upon the cross; and how, later on, he was a very angel in all respects to the flock committed to his care. Now if you ask what it was that made John lead on earth an angel's life, reflect for a few moments, and the answer will suggest itself to you; it was his love, his love for our Lord. Wherefore drink, as the Church says, to-day of the love of John, grow and increase in that love, and then when the Christmas festival again comes round, you will not kneel before the lowly manger of your Redeemer in the character of a miserable sinner so much as heretofore; you will have acquired somewhat at least of the character of an angel.

DECEMBER 28TH.

ON THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS AT BETHLEHEM.

Go to-day in spirit with the shepherds of Bethlehem to the birthplace of the Redeemer; picture to yourself clearly these poor, uncouth peasants, first gazing at the divine Child with holy curiosity and amazement on the one hand, on the other with profound reverence and joy; then involuntarily falling on their knees before Him in lowly worship. And when you have thoroughly impressed this touching scene on your mind, consider:

1st. The great faith of the shepherds. They see before them an infant, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, crying with the cold, weak and helpless as any other child. As far as externals go they see no great difference between Mary's divine Child and one of their own little children. But what is not perceptible to the bodily eyes is discerned by the eye of faith. By means of this faith, kindled in their hearts by the words the angels spoke and by the light that shone around them, they are enabled to perceive that it is their God who is present in the manger, and they prostrate themselves before Him, adoring Him in all humility and holy awe. If, my soul, you only had the lively faith of those simple herdsmen of Bethlehem, you would feel very differently when you approach your God in the tabernacle where He abides as in the manger at Bethlehem: you would not be so cold, so dry, so easily distracted. Wherefore endeavor to-day to awaken within your heart a steadfast, childlike faith, and then your adoration will be more fervent, your devotion more ardent to the divine Child in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

2d. Consider how, as the shepherds gazed upon the divine Infant, their joy and delight increased every moment, their love, the warmth of their devotion was heightened each instant. See in imagination how Mary shows them the newly-born Infant; how kindly and piously she

talks to them about Him and about the song which the angels sang. Contemplate and meditate upon this touching spectacle, for in the manner in which these simple, kindly peasants now spoke with affectionate familiarity to the sweet and gracious Infant, and then again regarded Him with holy awe and timid reverence, you have an example and a model of what your attitude of soul should be when you hold intercourse with the divine Child either in prayer or in Holy Communion. But alas! how much is wanting to you! Where is that happy combination of loving, humble familiarity and salutary fear, when you kneel before the crib? Reflect to-day upon the cause of this lack of fervor on your part, and the means of putting an end to it.

3d. St. Jerome, one of the Fathers of the Church, lived for thirty-eight years in the same cave in which the shepherds adored the Infant Jesus. Listen and ponder upon the way in which this saint understood how to combine familiarity and veneration, love and adoration in his intercourse with the divine Child: "As often (such are his words) as I look upon the spot where my Saviour was born, I hold sweet converse with Him in this fashion: Alas! my Jesus, I say, on what a hard bed Thou dost lie in the manger for my sake. What return can I make to Thee for this? Then I seem to hear the tender Infant answer: I desire nothing but that thou shouldst sing, Glory to God in the highest! And I reply: O my Beloved, I must give something to Thee, I will give Thee all that I possess. And He replies to me: Heaven is Mine and the earth is Mine. I have need of nothing; give thy money to the poor. I will accept it as if it were given to Me. Then I rejoin: That I will do right willingly, but I must also give something to Thee Thyself, or I shall die of grief. And the Child answers: If thou art so generously-minded, I will tell thee what thou mayest give up to Me. Give up thy sins, give up thy evil conscience, and the prospect before thee of eternal perdition. Then I say: What wilt Thou do with them? The Child rejoins: I will take all upon My shoulders, for that is My glory and My

triumph, that I bear and take away thy sins. Thereupon I, despite my advanced age, begin to weep, and say: Sweet Child, dearest Child, how Thy words touch my heart! Take all that is mine, and give me what is Thine; thus shall I be delivered from the burden of sin and made sure of attaining everlasting felicity." There, my soul, you see in what wise a saint converses with the Child Jesus—how is it with you?

DECEMBER 29TH.

ON THE MEANS WHEREBY THE SHEPHERDS MERITED THE
PRIVILEGE OF BEING THE FIRST TO BEHOLD THE
INFANT CHRIST.

Perhaps, my soul, during yesterday's meditation, a feeling of holy envy took possession of your heart at the immense favor granted to the shepherds, that of being the first and only witnesses of the birth of Christ, as well as at the ineffable happiness, the serene joy, wherewith their souls overflowed on that occasion. Enter to-day into the joy of those pious herdsmen of Bethlehem, and then ask yourself for what reason this grace was vouchsafed to them in particular. The means whereby they earned it is a very simple one; it is nothing else than the virtue of obedience.

1st. Consider how the shepherds obeyed the command of the angels, bidding them go at once to Bethlehem. They did not set at naught the angels' injunction; they did not say to themselves: We cannot leave our flocks, or: What does that matter to us? No, as soon as the angels had spoken, they exclaimed with admirable docility: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." (St. Luke ii. 15.) O blissful obedience, how gloriously wert thou rewarded! Kings and prophets have earnestly desired to see and have not seen what it was given to these shepherds to see because of their obedience. Perhaps,

however, you will say: Who would not obey angels? The answer to your query, my soul, is short and simple: You do not obey; you do not obey the injunctions of your Guardian Angel, and what is more, you do not obey the commands of God Himself. Or do you not consider that what the Rule and your Superiors enjoin on you is the will of God, by whose inspiration the Rule was framed, and of whom, as St. Paul tells us, all the powers are ordained? And then you complain of having so little consolation, so little peace of mind! Be obedient like the shepherds, and soon, like them, you will be happy and content.

2d. Consider that the shepherds obey promptly. The evangelist expressly states that they came with haste to the Lord's birthplace. Thus we see that they did not delay their departure, they did not discuss and debate what they should do, what was the meaning of the command; they did not say amongst themselves: It is night now, we had better wait until the day breaks. No; the angel bids them go, and instantly they obey. O blissful obedience, and doubly blissful prompt obedience! It is to prompt obedience that the greatest events, those that most abound in blessings for mankind, are due. Mary obeyed as soon as the will of God was announced to her by the Archangel Gabriel, and she became the Mother of God. St. Peter obeyed the command of our Lord: "Follow Me," and from a common fisherman he became the chief of the apostles. Paul obeyed the voice of Christ on the road to Damascus, and from a persecutor of our Lord he became His highly favored disciple. O my soul, should you not to-day bewail your tardy, your reluctant obedience?

3d. Consider that the shepherds obey gladly. In their holy eagerness they are more than desirous, they are almost impatient to behold that of which the angel had just brought them the tidings. This joyful obedience is what God loves, for it arises from a pure motive. The brute animals obey their master, but out of terror of the whip. The idle servant obeys, but grudgingly and com-

plainingly. Even the devil obeys God, but with gnashing of teeth. Wherefore, my soul, see that from henceforth you obey promptly and cheerfully. Make a solemn promise to-day to do so when you kneel at the crib; renew, whilst you are there, your vow of holy obedience, and like the pious shepherds you will experience the happiness, the blessing, obedience brings with it; and you will receive a double measure of grace and blessing if your obedience be prompt and also willing.

DECEMBER 30TH.

ON THE POVERTY OF THE REDEEMER'S BIRTHPLACE.

To-day we will contemplate the poverty in which the divine Child was born. Imagine that you see before you the dilapidated stable, affording little protection from wind and rain, the hard, uneasy manger, the absence of every convenience, every comfort in the surroundings. And when you have fully realized and impressed on your mind the extreme poverty of the Infant Jesus, consider:

1st. How the needy and destitute find a marvellous solace in the poverty that marked our Lord's birth. Consider how, before Christ, the poor were throughout the whole world held in the utmost contempt, how no one paid any heed to them, how even among the chosen people of God, the Jews, poverty was considered as an evil and a disgrace, many even looking upon it as a chastisement from the hand of God, like the blindness which the disciples judged so harshly in the poor man who was born blind. Thus you will see that the light in which they were regarded could not fail to awaken in the breast of the poor a feeling that they were the step-children of our heavenly Father, and treated by Him as such; that they were outcasts, forsaken by God. And if so, how wonderful the consolation they received at the Saviour's crib on Christmas Day, since they then saw that the only-begotten, well-beloved Son of God, in whom He was well-

pleased, shared their poverty, their want. My God, they could then say, like me, is poor and destitute; my God suffers hunger and thirst as I do; my God has, like me, no roof to shelter Him. What singular consolation for the poor lies in this one thought; what abundant matter for meditation is to be found in this one word: A God who is poor!

2d. Consider how poverty was honored at the Saviour's crib. The visit of a royal personage is considered as a great honor for a house, even though that house be but a thatched cottage. Centuries after a father will with pride show his children the goblet—in itself valueless, but highly prized because some emperor of renown once drank out of it; or he will exhibit to them the wooden bench on which the royal personage sat to rest. But what is the highest earthly king, the most illustrious emperor, in comparison with the King of Heaven, the Lord of hosts exalted far above all earthly fame and distinction, who chose poverty for His closest, most inseparable companion? He was born in poverty, brought up in poverty; His Mother was poor, His dwelling was poor; He lived in poverty and died in poverty. How greatly is poverty thus dignified and honored! See how since our Lord's birth amid such destitute surroundings poverty has been held as much in esteem as formerly it was despised; for since our Lord declared that what ye did unto the poor, ye did it unto Me, Christian people, both high and low, vie with each other in the service of the poor, and Christian kings and emperors do not disdain even to wash the feet of the poor for the sake of Jesus, who was poor.

3d. Consider how poverty was sanctified at our Lord's birth. Everything is hallowed which is directly employed in divine service. The vestment which the Priest wears when as God's representative he celebrates the holy sacrifice of the Mass is blest, the altar on which the Victim is immolated is blest, and so are the sacred vessels employed for the holy sacrifice. In the same manner poverty was sanctified at the birth of Christ; it was the vestment in which the divine Child was arrayed, it

was the altar whereon He daily offered the oblation of His self-abnegation and renunciation. And, marvellous to relate, this poverty, which St. Francis so beautifully terms the faithful spouse of the Redeemer, who alone followed Him to the cross and in whose embrace He expired, this poverty, itself sanctified by Christ, has in turn been the means of sanctifying thousands of mankind. Pass in review the bright galaxy of saints and you will not meet with one who was not poor, at any rate in spirit; ask the saints what was the means of their sanctification, and a vast number of them will answer, it was poverty. Furthermore, my soul, consider this: The poor man who bears his hard lot with patience makes a virtue of necessity; but he who practises poverty, not because he is obliged, but of his own free will, attains a far higher degree of virtue. He imitates Jesus most perfectly, Jesus who though all the heavens were His, contented Himself with a stable for His birthplace; He who clothes the earth with verdure and the stars with light, gave Himself to be wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes; He who was the richest of all, voluntarily became the poorest of all. Oh do you not feel drawn, do you not feel animated by an eager desire this day to renew your vow of voluntary poverty at the Saviour's crib, and will you not strive from henceforth to keep that vow with greater love, with more fidelity?

DECEMBER 31ST.

A SOLEMN MEDITATION BESIDE THE CRIB OF THE INFANT SAVIOUR.

Hitherto, my soul, your meditations upon the birth of Christ have been of a pleasing nature; you have been filled with holy joy and have stood beside the manger with a certain delight, experiencing nothing but solace, rest, peace and tranquil happiness. To-day you must admit other thoughts, solemn, serious thoughts, which cannot

be excluded from the mind when contemplating the Infant Jesus in the manger. Look at that sweet Child and consider this truth: A cross awaits this tender Child; upon this Child divine justice will pour out in full measure the vials of its wrath. To enable you to realize this, consider:

1st. The justice of God, and the manner in which it was manifested in earlier times. Think of Lucifer and his adherents, for whom a just God kindled the fire of hell, a fire which to all eternity will not be extinguished; think of the misery which in punishment of one single sin committed by Adam, a just God sent upon all mankind; think of the fate of the human race which at the time of Noe, a just God saw fit to exterminate by the deluge, saving only eight persons; think of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed completely by a just God with fire and brimstone from heaven; think of Pharaoh and his host swallowed up in the waves of the Red Sea by command of a just God; think, finally, of the hundreds and thousands of Israelites, who all fell in the desert without ever seeing the land of promise. And when you have fully impressed upon your mind the awful nature of the retributive justice of God, turn your thoughts to the manger at Bethlehem, and:

2d. Consider the divine Child in His character of expiatory victim to reconcile sinful man with a justly angered God. With what delight in these days you have gazed upon that Infant! But have you not noticed the bitter tears Mary shed as she contemplated her little Child? Alas! how keen is the pain that Mother's heart feels, knowing, as she does, how strictly divine justice will deal with that Infant, how severe will be the penalty inflicted on Him. A crown of sharp thorns is reserved for the head of that innocent Child, the head now surrounded by a halo of celestial brightness! The gracious countenance that smiles on you in so engaging a manner from the manger-bed will one day be disfigured beyond recognition on the cross. Those soft little hands and feet will be pierced by cruel nails; the delicate form now swathed in swaddling-clothes will one day be so wounded and bruised that there will be no sound spot left from the crown of His head to the sole

of His foot. And that will all be for your sake, my soul; in order that you may escape the chastisements of divine justice. Oh ponder this deeply; ponder moreover with two-fold attention on this last day of the year:

3d. The justice of God, appeased by the divine Child by means of an atonement of so great magnitude. Remember that for every day, nay more, for every hour of the year, you must render an account to the just God; you must furthermore give account of all the countless graces which He has lavished upon you so freely—on you who are a Religious, a Priest—and which you perhaps, like the un-faithful servant, have buried in the earth misused. You will have to give an account of every word you have spoken, of every thought you have entertained, of every action you have performed, of every omission of which you have been guilty; and this account you will have to render to a God who in the execution of what His justice demands required so severe an atonement even from the tender Infant in the manger. Oh cast yourself on your knees before the crib to-day with heartfelt compunction; acknowledge and confess to the divine Child with profound penitence all of which you have been guilty during the past year; implore Him to intercede for you with His Father, who is justly angry, in order that the barren tree may be left standing one more year, and the heavenly Husbandman may wait in His mercy to see if it will not bear fruit. Now ask yourself how you will begin the new year, what measures you will take to insure making a better use of it, and thus avoid incurring the wrath of a just God; and let the resolution you make be the chief fruit of your meditation this day.

JANUARY 1ST.

ON THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

To-day, my soul, you will accompany the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to the scene of the Infant Jesus' circumcision. Picture clearly to yourself the gracious Child there laid upon a table, patient and gentle as an

innocent lamb, while at the sight of the sharp knife in the Priest's hand, the knife which is to be instrumental in causing the innocent Infant to feel acute physical pain for the first time, Mary, His loving Mother, is filled with tender sorrow and compassion.

1st. Consider the obedience of Jesus and Mary, which is brought into prominence at the circumcision. Although the Blessed Virgin feels very acutely the circumcision of her divine Child, both out of sympathy for the tender Infant who must so early become acquainted with suffering, and also because she is fully conscious that the law is not binding upon Him, the supreme Lawgiver, yet she complies with it, and submits to the stern legal behest in a spirit of obedience, of voluntary obedience; and Jesus Himself remains passive, in order at the very outset of His earthly life to place His obedience in contradistinction to Adam's disobedience. Reflect deeply upon this, my soul, and see that, at the commencement of the new year, you compensate for the many acts of disobedience of which you were guilty in the past year, by making a solemn promise to practise exact obedience during the year upon which you have just entered. Of a truth you cannot begin it better than with this fundamental virtue of the Christian and more particularly of the Religious, for without it all their efforts and strivings after amendment are vain; they are houses built on the sand. And in order to render this first sacrifice of the year somewhat easier to you, consider:

2d. The humility of Jesus, as displayed at His circumcision: Although perfectly innocent and free from every stain of sin, on the eighth day after His birth He submits to the rite, just as if He were like the other sons of men, and bore the taint of original sin. To Adam's act of disobedience was due all the subsequent misery of the human race, and that disobedience sprang from Adam's pride; for the serpent had said to him: "You shall be as gods." (Gen. iii. 5.) The obedience of our Lord was, on the contrary, as you saw in the first point of this meditation, the commencement of man's salvation; and the motive that impelled Him to perform this act of obedience was His hu-

mility. Without humility there is no obedience and without obedience no humility. If you are humble you will be ready to obey, and through obedience you will become humble. If therefore, my soul, at the conclusion of the first portion of this meditation you formed a resolution to practise obedience in order that by a good beginning you may hallow the whole of the new year, now close your consideration of the second part with the petition that the Child Jesus may vouchsafe to-day to make you a partaker of His humility.

3d. Consider how in the circumcision the blood of Jesus was shed for the first time. This first shedding of blood in the opening week of His life on earth, was the earnest and at the same time the pledge and surety of the second shedding of blood in the closing week of His life. By this shedding of His blood whilst still an innocent child the Redeemer bound Himself already to the cross and consecrated Himself to a life of sacrifice, the beginning and end of which are alike sealed by His atoning blood. To-day our Lord offers Himself for the first time as an expiatory victim; He offers as a morning sacrifice His precious blood, and thereby pledges Himself in due time to present the same oblation as an evening sacrifice on the altar of the cross.

And now, my soul, let your life during the new year be a life of sacrifice. On this first day of the year, this very day, offer some such oblation as your Saviour did, as an earnest and a pledge for the future. Do not rise from this meditation until, in thanksgiving for the circumcision, you have resolved upon making some sacrifice, whether it be that you will recite a particular prayer, willingly undertake a distasteful task, or practise some other mortification; do this, and you may be assured that you have begun the new year well.

JANUARY 2D.

ON THE NAME OF JESUS.

To-day consider briefly at the commencement of your meditation what you and thousands and millions of your fellow men feel and experience when they utter the name of Jesus. Consider how this name inspires one with holy joy, another with abject terror; how in uttering the name of Jesus one heart is kindled with the flame of ardent affection, while another melts into tears of compunction. And if your heart burns within you when you think of or call upon that sacred name, consider:

1st. The name Jesus is a precious name. This we see without difficulty, from the fact that the blessings for the world attached to this name were dearly purchased and earned, inasmuch as the price paid for them was no other than the precious blood of the eternal Son of God. As Jacob did not receive the honorable surname of Israel until he had wrestled with the angel of God, so the Son of God did not take the name of Jesus until He had shed His blood in the circumcision. That is what makes this name so precious and so dear to us. For just as a man values and delights far more in some appellation given him as a reward for his chivalrous deeds than the name that is his by birth, so although the various names which the Saviour can claim on account of the union of His human and divine nature are honorable and excellent in the eyes of men, yet none is so precious to them as the name of Jesus, which He purchased with His own blood.

You, my soul, have exchanged the name given to you for no merit of your own at the baptismal font, or which you inherited from your parents, for your name in Religion, and that was not given to you altogether without your deserving it, for to leave the world is in itself a meritorious act. On that account this name ought to be precious to you above all else; it ought to become daily more precious to you, because, as Jesus day by day through fresh acts of

sacrifice, enhanced the value of the name He purchased by His first sacrifice, so you by daily acts of self-conquest can render the name given you in Religion on the occasion of your first sacrifice ever dearer to yourself and more pleasing in God's sight.

2d. Consider that the name of Jesus is a saving name. St. Luke speaking of it says: "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) Who can estimate aright the benefits, the saving blessings which are attached to this name! Pass in review, my soul, this day, all the favors conferred on mankind, the miracles that have been wrought, the deeds of charity performed, the conversions effected in the name of Jesus! Think how that name alone is our solace in suffering, our hope in the hour of death, our strength in temptation, our succor in danger, and light in our darkness; then fall down and adore this sacred and saving name, giving thanks to God for all the graces bestowed upon you in and through that holy name of Jesus.

3d. Consider that the name of Jesus is a sacred name. No man or angel, not the highest of the cherubim can bear this name, but God alone. From all eternity it was destined to be the name of the incarnate Son of God, and one of the celestial princes who stand before the throne of God was selected as the messenger who should first proclaim it to man. Hence you may conclude how holy and sacred is the name of Jesus. If the Jews in early times held the name of Jehovah in such reverence that no man dared to utter it except the high priest alone, and the people fell on their faces to the ground when they heard the name of God, in what profound veneration ought not you, my soul, to hold the precious and salutary name of Jesus? What has been your conduct in this respect hitherto? Ask yourself that question, and then in conclusion reflect that you too bear a hallowed name, that is, the name of a saint. You have already contemplated, in the first point of this meditation, the manner whereby you can make the name you bear precious and dear to you; now as the fruit of your meditation resolve

further to render your name salutary as well, by so regulating your life and your actions that at the mere sound of your name every one who knows you will experience a feeling of respect or affection or gratitude; that by the good example you give, your name may be an occasion of edification and not of scandal to your fellow men. Strive after this to the utmost of your power, but do all in the name of Jesus.

JANUARY 3D.

ON THE POWER OF THE NAME OF JESUS.

There is a pleasing tradition concerning St. Ignatius the martyr, which tells us that when the saintly Bishop was thrown to the wild beasts, the ferocious animals, although they tore him limb from limb, did not venture to touch his heart, because the name of Jesus was inscribed upon it. Now in order to acquaint yourself more fully with the power of the name of Jesus, which tames even the bloodthirsty brutes, you will do well to consider:

1st. That this name, as St. Bernard asserts, is like honey, which by its sweetness removes all bitter flavor from the mouth. For the invocation of the holy name gives solace to the troubles of the soul, and renders sweet and agreeable what is bitter and harsh. Like the wood which Moses once cast into a stream that was bitter to the taste, and which counteracted the bitterness of the water, and made it a palatable drink, so the sacred name of Jesus possesses the power to sweeten the bitter waters of affliction. The name of Jesus, says St. Augustine, is to those who love God a most pleasant sound, sweet beyond all sweetness; and the seraphic St. Francis declares that as often as he heard the name of Jesus, it was as if his mouth were filled with the most delicious honey. Were you, my soul, to invoke this sweet name more frequently and with greater devotion, most certainly your words would not be so bitter, your judgments not so severe, your strictures would not be characterized by such animosity.

2d. Consider how this name charms the ear like a melodious song, the dulcet sounds of which enrapture the heart. You need only think of all that Jesus is to us: Jesus is our Father; Jesus is our faithful pastor; Jesus is our teacher; Jesus is our spiritual food and drink; Jesus is our way, our truth and our life; Jesus is our physician; Jesus is our consolation; Jesus is our ransom; Jesus is our final reward and our everlasting crown. Say, my soul, does not every one of these words fall like a note of music on the ear, and does not each one contain in itself abundant matter for meditation? Wherefore instead of lending your ear to idle and unprofitable words, listen to this wondrous and melodious sound, the name of Jesus; and thereby render yourself worthy to utter that name with your expiring breath, so that it may be your last song, and amid its harmonious sounds your soul may gladly escape from its mortal prison.

3d. Consider how this name is a wonderful protection and a salutary medicine. Our Lord Himself says: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you." (St. John xvi. 23.) And in fact, if you are assailed by the temptations of the devil, call upon Jesus for succor, for His name is a terror to the spirits of evil. If you are a poor, unhappy sinner, send up your humble petition to Jesus. He is your Saviour, He came to seek and to save those that were lost. If you are wholly unclean, covered from head to foot with the leprosy of sin, go to Him, for He has prepared for you a fountain filled with blood from His precious wounds, wherein you may cleanse your soul from all its stains; if you have wandered from the right way, call upon Jesus, for He goes in search of the lost sheep; finally when you are in your last agony, invoke the name of Jesus with your last breath, for He will be your light in that dread hour when the shades of darkness close around you; and even in death He will be your life.

Behold, my soul, all that the name of Jesus is. Oh, how sweet, how agreeable, how powerful is that holy name! And since that name is contemned, hated, blasphemed by

thousands, what will you do both now and in the time to come in reparation, in expiation; what will you do to promote the greater glory of the holy name of Jesus?

JANUARY 4TH.

ON THE JOURNEY OF THE THREE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

In commencing your meditation, my soul, see that you fully grasp this memorable fact, that while in Bethlehem, the actual birthplace of Christ, scarcely any notice was taken of the Saviour born in its midst; that while in Jerusalem, only a few miles distant, in the temple wherein Simeon and Anna were known to be expecting the promised salvation, He was either superciliously ignored, or deemed altogether unworthy of attention, the birth of Christ was made known by means of a star to three men, thousands of miles away in a remote and foreign country. Immediately they set out and came with haste to see the Infant Christ, as did the shepherds, only with this difference, that the strangers from the East had to spend as many days on their journey as the shepherds had to take steps, in order to reach the stable where our Lord was laid. Accompany the three Magi in spirit, on the way thither, and consider:

1st. The joy that they felt when they saw the star going before them to guide and direct them. See here the reward of faith. In undoubting faith without delay they set forth on their journey, and what a journey it was! They had to go to a country a hundred miles distant, to travel across deserts and through dense forests; over steep mountains and rapid streams, and this at an epoch when there were no conveniences for travelling, no level roads, no means of conveyance. A toilsome journey indeed was that! But their faith was stronger than all these obstacles; and as soon as they obeyed the call of faith, the guiding star appeared to them, imparting consolation and courage for their pilgrimage.

If grace urges you, my soul, to undertake a work which is pleasing to God but arduous to perform, begin it in steadfast faith and firm confidence in Him from whom the impulse comes, and you will soon find that through Him that will become easy which was difficult, that will become practicable which appeared impossible of execution.

2d. Consider that the three wise men follow the star whithersoever it conducts them. They do not turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, they do not follow what they may consider their own better judgment, they do not allow themselves to be persuaded by the arguments of others to swerve from the road wherein the star leads them. What a useful lesson you may learn from their conduct, my soul. Your life on earth is a journey to the promised land, and from time to time our Lord permits a bright star to appear to you for your guidance. The sound human reason wherewith He has endowed you is such a star; so is the light of the true faith, the Catholic religion, whereby you are surrounded; so are the inspirations and enlightenments of the Holy Ghost wherein you rejoice; also the admonitions and injunctions of your Confessor, your Superior, the constitutions of your Order, all of which are the voice of God speaking to you. These stars one and all would guide you by the most direct way to Jesus, as surely as the star did the wise men, if you would only follow their guidance as literally as the three kings followed the star; never deviating to the right hand or to the left, in accordance with what you may suppose to be your own superior knowledge or that of others.

3d. Consider how the sudden disappearance of the star did not disconcert the three Magi. It would have been no wonder had they felt dismayed on perceiving that, as they drew near to Jerusalem, their faithful guide was no longer visible in the heavens. It was God's will to try their faith which had already been sufficiently rewarded, and moreover to give them occasion to apply for an explanation to the Scribes and learned men in Jerusalem, and thus direct their attention to the birth of Christ. How well the wise men stood the test! They did not

allow themselves, even by the disappearance of their guide, to be diverted from the accomplishment of the object of their journey; they chose rather to awaken alarm and excite the minds of men in Jerusalem than to desist from their efforts to find the Christ. From this learn, my soul, what you ought to do, if the star of divine consolation is suddenly withdrawn from your sight, if all at once the darkness of night closes in upon your soul, if your prayers, your religious exercises cease to afford you any satisfaction. Oh, then do not omit a single one of your accustomed devotions or good works; remember how the three wise men unwaveringly pursued their search for the Messias, and the star will reappear to you as it reappeared to them. Meanwhile offer this fervent petition to Almighty God: Do with me, O my God, according to Thy divine good pleasure, and cast me not away on account of the sinfulness of my life, which is better, more fully known to no one than to Thee.

JANUARY 5TH.

ON THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE THREE WISE MEN TO BETHLEHEM.

The three kings have left Jerusalem and now, animated with fervent desire and holy longing, they take the road leading from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, proceeding onward towards the goal of their long journey. Imagine that you see these three travellers on the road, and imagine also what their thoughts and feelings were at that time. Then consider:

1st. That the three kings departed from Jerusalem immediately. They did not allow themselves to be detained an hour longer than was necessary at Herod's brilliant court; they devoted none of their time to inspecting the splendors of the royal city and its yet more glorious marble temple, but as soon as they had received the information they required they forthwith set out on the way to Bethle-

hem. They knew only too well how difficult a thing it is to find God in the mansions of the great, amid the turmoil of crowded streets. Nay, more, how often it happens that when we have found God and His grace, we lose Him again in intercourse with the world, in the society of the votaries of the world. Observe this, my soul: "In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward, and becomes the more familiar with her Creator, the further she lives from all worldly tumult" (Imit. Book i. ch. 20); the further the wise men left Jerusalem behind, the nearer they drew to Jesus.

2d. Consider how the star which had withdrawn its light from the three Magi all at once shone out again on them with its full radiance. That which they had lost in the great and opulent city, amid its magnificence and its turmoil, they found again on the lonely road to Bethlehem. Lay that well to heart, and meditate upon it. You too have left Jerusalem, that is, the world, for the purpose of finding Jesus in the quiet Bethlehem of a life of retirement, or perhaps the life of the cloister. Observe that the beauteous star of spiritual consolation, of devotion, the power of realizing God's presence, will only shine upon you, as the guiding star did on the wise men, in solitude and seclusion. As soon as you return to Jerusalem, when "the desires of sense draw thee to walk abroad, what dost thou bring back when the hour is past, save a weight upon thy conscience and dissipation of heart?" No, my soul, in your cell alone will you find what you will often lose out of it, just as the three kings saw the star again in Bethlehem for which in Jerusalem they sorrowfully looked in vain.

3d. Consider how the star which had been going before them suddenly stopped over the house where the Infant Jesus lay, and the three kings found themselves at the end of their journey. Picture them to yourself at this moment when their goal was reached; try to enter into their thoughts, their emotions, to feel yourself what they felt and thought when they stood on the threshold of the lowly house. See them getting ready the gifts they had

brought to give pleasure to the divine Child; see them wiping off the dust of the road, so as to present themselves before Him with due respect, and do you also cleanse your conscience to-day, and endeavor to find some gifts of a spiritual nature, some good works, so that on the morrow you may approach the crib with the three kings, and not only kneel before the Infant Jesus in their company, but with them adore Him with holy reverence; like them open your treasures and offer Him your gifts.

THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE MYSTIC MEANING OF THE GIFTS OFFERED BY THE THREE KINGS.

Possibly, my soul, in spite of the joyful nature of the festival we celebrate to-day, it will be with a certain sadness of heart that you will kneel before the crib. In your meditation you see how the wise men present magnificent gifts to the divine Child with the intention of pleasing Him, and you yourself perhaps stand there poor and destitute, having nothing, absolutely nothing to offer. Of all that you have nothing is really your own, for all was given to you by God, with the exception of your sins, and you cannot well present them to Him. Are you then utterly destitute? Oh no, my soul; God, the call of whose grace you obeyed, has placed you in a position to offer for the divine Child's acceptance the very same gifts whereby the three kings afforded Him pleasure; only come forward into the Redeemer's presence and with the three wise men show your treasures; present to Him:

1st. The gold of voluntary poverty, of which you took the vow, or which it is your endeavor to practise as far as is consistent with your station and circumstances. Poverty is like gold; it is as precious, nay, far more precious than gold. Not only does it render you much freer and happier, richer and more contented here below than all the wealth of this world can make you, but it secures

for you the succession to an inheritance hereafter, an inheritance of such wealth and splendor that all the treasures of earth are but dust and ashes in comparison with it. Seeing then that your poverty is really mystic gold, remember that this precious metal shines all the more brightly the more it is refined in the crucible. If you desire the offering you present to-day to be truly pure and really valuable, I exhort you to practise the poverty to which you pledged yourself; see that you stand the test of fire. It is not enough merely to make the vow; you must be poor not merely in virtue of having taken the vow of poverty, but because your daily life is a life of poverty.

Your cell, your habit, your furniture, your recreations all ought to proclaim to you that you are poor; and what is more, you must be poor in your own person or at any rate willing to be poor; poor in honors and distinctions, poor in friends and patrons, and if God so will, poor in supernatural consolations and extraordinary graces. Then you will be able like the three kings to offer gold to Jesus, who is Himself poor; pure, refined, shining gold.

2d. Present to Him also the incense of obedience. How insignificant the little grains of incense look! Any one who did not know what they were would not take the trouble to pick them up, if he found them. But under the action of fire, when placed on the glowing embers, what an agreeable, what a delicious fragrance they send up to heaven! Behold in this an emblem of obedience. The man who is perfect in obedience is quiet and modest in his ordinary demeanor; he never puts himself forward; he is ready, like Antony, to wash dishes in the kitchen if obedience imposes this duty upon him. But as soon as the test of fire is applied to his obedience, he then no longer remains hidden; whilst others who till then were considered bright examples, succumb to temptation and fall from our sight, his obedience, like the cloud of sweet perfume emitted by incense, ascends to Heaven, and with it all the other virtues germane to obedience, such as humility, renunciation, trust in God. It ascends to the

throne of God on high where the Archangel Michael, exemplary in his obedience, standing on the right hand of the altar of incense, swings the censer instead of Lucifer, who was thrust out of that office on account of his disobedience. But mark one thing: The incense that emits no odor at all is worthless—that is, the man who is utterly disobedient; but the incense that does not smell sweet, which is, on the contrary, unpleasant to the senses, cannot be considered much better. That represents obedience when it is formal or the result of habit; a matter of eye-service, or arising from slavish fear or other purely human motives. Oh, do not offer such incense as that; offer the fragrant incense of willing obedience, obedience that is actuated by the love of God.

3d. Offer also the myrrh of chastity. Myrrh possesses the special property of preserving the body from decomposition and decay, and hence it is an apt symbol of chastity. For that is the virtue which not only preserves the body in its pristine purity and virginity, which not only invests it with a peculiar charm and subtle power, so that the sight of a chaste youth, a modest maiden is most pleasing and even impresses wicked men with involuntary reverence and respect, but it is the virtue which pre-eminently preserves the soul in the original beauty wherein God created it, and keeps it from spiritual decay. “O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory,” we read in Holy Scripture; and on the other hand, how hideous, how foul a sight is impurity! But observe this well: myrrh is extremely bitter, and chastity likewise is bitter; it costs human nature many a conflict, many a struggle, a great amount of self-denial to practise it. As myrrh comes from the stony deserts of Arabia, so the flower of chastity only flourishes on the stony soil of mortification, of fasting, of an austere rather than an easy life. David was chaste when in his shepherd-days he slept under the blue vault of heaven; how sad was his fall when his crowned head was pillowled on soft velvet cushions! Wherefore bring an offering to-day in this respect also to the Infant Jesus; offer Him the bitter myrrh of chastity and you

will then have presented to Him the very same gifts which the three kings presented for His acceptance.

JANUARY 7TH.

ON THE REASON WHY THIS THREEFOLD OFFERING WAS MADE BY THE MAGI.

Look back, my soul, to that period when the abomination of desolation was to be seen in the temple at Jerusalem. The Chaldeans had invaded the land of the Jews, they had taken Jerusalem by assault, and run riot in the temple of God like demons set loose there, pillaging and destroying the dwelling-place of the Most High. And yet only yesterday we saw the descendants of those Chaldeans, the wise men who came from the East, enter the house of the self-same God, not now blaspheming, but adoring; no longer plundering, but bringing gifts. Behold how they go up to the Infant Jesus, and consider:

1st. That the first and foremost of the three strangers offers Him gold, as if he would say: I, O Lord, come of that race which in bygone times pillaged Thy temple and carried away all the treasures belonging to it, the gold and silver vessels of the sanctuary. Vouchsafe graciously to accept this gold, which I have brought with me as an atonement for that robbery.

Consider that the second offers frankincense, just as if he would say: My Lord and my God, I acknowledge how great was the sin committed by my nation, when Thy temple was so shamefully desecrated by them, when they stabled their horses in it, and not only polluted it by the filth and stench of those animals, but profaned it by idolatrous worship. In expiation of that disgraceful outrage deign to accept this offering of sweet-smelling, aromatic incense, which it befits Thee to receive, who art the only true God.

Consider that the third and last offers myrrh; as if to say: **O** my God, I have heard of the great impiety of my

forefathers, who shed blood in Thy holy temple, the blood of Thy consecrated Priests, whom they put to death. In reparation for this iniquity be pleased to accept the oblation for the dead, the myrrh and spices employed in embalming. Look, I pray Thee, upon the good will and pious intention of which this trifling gift is intended to be the expression rather than upon the offering itself.

2d. Now ask yourself, my soul, how this meditation is to be practically applied to yourself. The wise men offered gold, frankincense and myrrh, as an act of atonement for the outrage committed upon the temple of God by their ancestors. What sin-offering have you brought for all the transgressions of which you have been guilty against the house of God? Are you surprised at this question concerning yourself? Remember, my soul, St. Paul tells you that you are yourself a temple of God. Oh, how often have you stripped this temple of its most beautiful, most valuable ornament, that is, sanctifying grace, by the sins you have committed! How often, like the godless Chaldeans, you have converted it into the unsavory abode of evil thoughts, of lawless desires, words and even works? How often have you put to death the Priests of that temple—that is to say, you have silenced, forcibly silenced good thoughts, the remonstrances of conscience, the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the admonitions of your Guardian Angel. Therefore arise, and offer as a propitiatory sacrifice the gold of contrite charity, the frankincense of penitential prayer, and the myrrh of painful mortifications which from this day forth you will pledge yourself to practise.

JANUARY 8TH.

ON THE JOY WHICH THE THREE HOLY KINGS FELT WHEN THEY FOUND JESUS.

To-day, my soul, you are called upon, in accordance with the exhortation of the Apostle: Rejoice with those that rejoice (Rom. xii. 15), to share in the joy of the three Magi on discovering the Infant Jesus. Look at them, those

three grave, venerable men, and see how their countenances beam with joy and their hearts overflow with delight at the sight of the beauteous Child. It is easy to understand their happiness, for,

1st. It is a pleasure to find anything for which one is seeking, and the pleasure we experience is proportionate to the value we attach to the object of which we are in search. Hence St. Bernard says in his beautiful hymn: "How good Thou art to those who seek, but what to those who find!" If Abraham desired so greatly to see the day of this Child's birth; if the pious Simeon gave utterance to heartfelt jubilation when his eyes beheld the salvation of the nations; if St. Augustine could wish for nothing in this world so much as to have seen the Redeemer in His sacred humanity, concluding most justly that to have done so must have been a joy above all conceivable joys, how great must the delight and exultation of the three wise men have been when at last they found and beheld with their eyes the Supreme Good, the gracious Child for whom they had yearned so long, whom they had sought so diligently! If you, my soul, only had this same longing to see the Child of Mary by faith, to be intimately conscious of His nearness, if you would only seek Him, that is to say, take real pains in your prayers, in your hours of meditation, when you assist at holy Mass, to find our Lord, to make yourself acquainted with Him, to realize fully His gracious presence, oh, how soon you would participate in the joy the three wise men felt!

2d. It is a greater pleasure to find what one is seeking, if one has been searching for it diligently; and, oh, how diligently, how zealously the three Magi sought the divine Child! They were not deterred by the length of the journey, the difficulties and hardships to be encountered on the way; yawning abysses, high mountains, steep rocks had no terrors for them; all the hindrances shrank into insignificance beside their longing to find Jesus. Hence we may judge how intense must have been their joy when at last their eyes beheld the object of their eager search. Reflect upon this, my soul: Perhaps whilst contemplating

the first point of this meditation your conscience gave you the consoling assurance: I too am seeking Jesus, I too earnestly desire to find Him; and yet in your prayers, when you go to Communion, although you find Him, you do not experience the same joy as did the three wise men. That is because your manner of seeking imposes on you no sacrifice; it is a mere matter of course, it does not rise above what is of daily and habitual occurrence, it does not require any special exertion, any special preparation, any special mortification on your part. See how the saints appeared to be inebriated with joy when engaged in prayer, or before and after Holy Communion. Do you imagine that they contented themselves with the ordinary form of preparation? No; the more fervent, the more arduous the search, the greater will be the joy when its object is found.

3d. The greatest pleasure of all is to find more than one had hoped or sought for. This was the case with the three wise men. They not only found the smiling Infant, the mere sight of whom filled them with rapture; with Him they also found Mary, the blessed Mother of God, whose virginal beauty charmed them, while her wise and gracious manner of speaking to them about the divine Child enchanted them. Now pause, and lay this to heart: It is no easy matter to find Jesus apart from His Mother. The three wise men found the Child in her virginal arms and their joy was thereby increased, can we not say doubled, for it is a twofold pleasure if we not only find a costly treasure, but find it in a receptacle which is in itself most valuable. It was from Mary's arms that St. Antony received the Child Jesus, and she herself gave her divine Son into the hands of St. Felix. Now if it happens that for a long time you strive, with no small exertion to yourself, to find our Lord in prayer, in meditation, in the sacraments, that is, find His grace and consolations, you know to whom you must have recourse in your need in order to find Him, and to experience a twofold joy in finding Him. It is to Mary that you must turn; she is the Gate of Heaven, and she will give you access to Jesus.

JANUARY 9TH.

ON THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE BY HIS
MOTHER.

Many and many a time, my soul, in reciting the Rosary, you have contemplated the Presentation of our Lord in the temple. But have you ever entered fully into the deep significance of that mystery? If not, do so to-day, and with this object imagine that you see Mary, poorly clad, unnoticed, or nearly so, by the frequenters of the temple, going up to the altar to present the divine Child to His heavenly Father. Then, leaving the temple at Jerusalem, transport yourself in spirit to Mount Ararat, and go back in thought several thousand years, and there you will see Noe, a stately and venerable old man, in his character of the second father of the human race, standing before the altar which he built upon the mountain, and offering to God the first post-diluvian sacrifice, in thanksgiving to the Creator for the deliverance of the few human beings left upon the earth after the terrible deluge. How great and sublime this sacrifice appears! Yet Mary's sacrifice was still greater, more sublime.

1st. Consider that if Noe's holocaust was so well-pleasing to God that He set the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of reconciliation and peace, how much more acceptable must Mary's oblation have been. She did not offer Him cattle and fowls as Noe did; she offered the eternal Son of God clothed in the flesh He took from her virginal body; she offered Him who is the image of Light eternal, the spotless mirror of the divine radiance, the most beautiful of the children of men, the Lamb of God who, as St. John proclaimed, taketh away the sins of the world, and concerning whom the voice of the Father was heard to utter these words: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2d. Consider how much more abundant in graces Mary's sacrifice was than that of Noe. The holocaust Noe offered put an end to the deluge of waters upon the earth; Jesus,

the oblation Mary offered, put an end to the deluge of iniquity. Noe's sacrifice secured to mankind an earthly existence; Mary's sacrifice gave mankind the promise of eternal life. Noe's sacrifice was the means of closing the heavens, so that from its opened flood-gates the destructive torrents of rain might no longer descend upon the earth; Mary's sacrifice, on the contrary, was the means of opening the heavens, and making a way for the copious streams of divine grace to fall upon the souls of men. Noe's sacrifice led to the re-populating of the desolate earth by the human race, whereas Mary's sacrifice peopled the courts of Heaven with the redeemed of mankind. Oh how infinitely superior is the oblation Mary offered!

3d. Consider that Noe offered his holocaust after the dove which he had sent out from the ark in the morning had returned in the evening carrying a leafy bough of an olive tree, thus showing him that the waters of the deluge had subsided. This type found its fulfilment in Mary, who, a pure and spotless dove, on this day came to the ark of the Covenant, the temple of God, when the day of the Old Dispensation was drawing to its close, bearing in her arms the green olive-branch, the emblem of peace, Christ Jesus, whose advent marks the cessation of the spiritual deluge of sin.

By these thoughts a new and beautiful meaning is attached to the Presentation of the Child Jesus by our Lady in the temple, and to the mystery of the Rosary which recalls it to our memory. Picture this to yourself frequently, and you will soon be able to recite this decade of the Rosary with increased devotion.

JANUARY 10TH.

ON SILENCE.

Before we accompany in our meditations the sweet Infant Jesus on His flight into Egypt, let us, my soul, in order as it were to equip ourselves for the journey we are about in spirit to undertake, devote our attention to a few

truths suited to this period of fasting and penance. One of the penitential exercises enjoined on you is silence. And in order that the practise of silence may have a lasting and a salutary effect upon you, place yourself in the presence of God. Imagine yourself on a still, tranquil night gazing up to Heaven where millions of worlds move on their noiseless course, speaking to us with a mute eloquence which touches and elevates the heart, while they burn like so many lamps before the altar of the Most High, who in majestic repose, in sacred and solemn silence sits upon His throne above. And when you have formed some conception of the supreme Deity enthroned in sublime silence, keep it before your mind while you consider:

1st. That the pagan sages recognized the value of silence, and many among them on that account enjoined strict silence on their disciples for the space of some years. "Listen in silence to the words God will speak," is a very ancient doctrine. Under the Old Dispensation when the Jews desired to hear the voice of their God, to learn His will, the high priest was accustomed to leave the noisy multitude and go without a word, without a sound into the Holy of Holies, where God spoke to him. The people of Israel listened in respectful silence to the voice of the Law-giver on Mount Sinai; Mary in her solitary chamber heard in silence from the lips of the angel the message, the design of Almighty God; Joseph and Mary in the grotto at Bethlehem awaited in speechless silence the advent of the Redeemer, and in silence no less profound the apostles, assembled in the upper room at Jerusalem, looked for the descent of the Holy Spirit. See that you, my soul, observe the silence enjoined on you faithfully and cheerfully. O what a rich compensation for the loss of the vain conversation of miserable mortals you would find, if you would listen to the voice of God and converse with Him in the sweet and sacred colloquy of the heart. Mark this well: by silence we speak with God, and he who has learnt best how to keep silence will be the one who will speak best of God in the confessional, in the pulpit, and in spiritual discourses.

2d. Consider how God speaks to you both exteriorly and interiorly. He speaks to you particularly at this season by the spiritual books you read yourself and hear read by others, the sermons you attend, etc., but that is not all: your God speaks to you interiorly also; in the silence of your heart He makes His voice heard, admonishing, warning, comforting, encouraging you. Wherefore keep silence, not exterior silence only, but interior silence as well, in order that you may be able to hear this divine voice clearly. Of what use is it if during the time of silence you do not speak with your lips, but entertain vain, idle thoughts in your heart, if you amuse yourself with worldly books likely to distract your thoughts? In that case the mouth is silent but the heart speaks, not with God indeed, with whom it ought to speak, but with the world, and the fruit of silence is lost just as entirely as if you had indulged in talking.

3d. Finally consider, in order to-day to gain a right appreciation of the advantages of silence, the words of Solomon: "He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from distress." (Prov. xxi. 23.) You can attest the truth of this maxim from your own experience. Only think how often with your tongue you have inflicted a wound on your own soul, how often by some unfortunate speech you have in one moment deprived yourself of all that you had been at such pains to acquire, recollection of heart, good dispositions, union with God. Consider how often frivolous conversation has robbed you of the peace of soul which it had cost you so hard a struggle to obtain, and on the other hand think of the sweet repose in God and with God which you enjoyed during the time that you made the exercises in silence, and assuredly your love for silence will revive within you; it is your spiritual sabbath here below, and the best means of preparation for the eternal, peaceful sabbath above.

JANUARY 11TH.

ON FASTING.

In our meditations during the season of Advent we saw the unspeakable misery brought upon the human race through eating what was forbidden. Christ came in order to deliver us from the consequences of that indulgence, and fasting, the practice which is most directly opposed to it, plays an important part in His work of redemption. Contemplate your Redeemer and observe how He began His public ministry with fasting, with a fast of forty days' duration, and how fasting was the accompaniment of all He did and suffered. From the time of the Last Supper until He breathed His last upon the cross, the gall which was placed to His lips, the vinegar offered to quench His thirst, were all which He had to sustain nature in the way of food or drink. And while you keep before your eyes the Saviour who fasts so austerity, consider:

1st. That fasting invests man with great dignity, inasmuch as he thereby shows himself to be superior to animal gratification, shows himself to be lord over nature. For mark this: Strictly speaking it is not only inordinate participation in food and drink that is a degradation of humanity; even the simple consumption of ordinary nourishment is more or less a humiliation to man, since it proves that he, the lord of creation, requires creatures to sustain his life; that he must, if he would preserve himself from death, daily assimilate lifeless matter. For the aliments he takes to keep him alive, whether animal or vegetable, are all dead. It was otherwise before the fall; then the consumption of food was rather a gracious condescension on the part of man to inanimate nature, which he in the form of food and drink raised to and transformed into his higher nature. But since sin came into the world, man has become subject to his lower nature; he is compelled to take food or else he would die. That there is a certain humiliation in this obligation may be gathered

from the fact that when one thinks of persons for whom one entertains a great respect, such as the Holy Father, or some Bishop, one does not picture them to oneself at table; least of all are we inclined to connect the idea of eating with the highest of all beings, with the person of our Lord. He therefore who fasts only takes such an amount of food and drink as is absolutely necessary; he returns, as it were, to the original dignity of man. All eminent saints in whom human nature was seen in its original sanctity and supremacy fasted most rigorously.

2d. Consider that fasting imparts to man moral power of a high degree. Just as inordinate indulgence in the pleasures of the table weakens a man's moral power, and makes him incapable of elevated thought and lofty deeds, so nothing fortifies our soul like fasting. This is easy to understand. He who has mastered the strongest and most natural impulse of his physical being, the craving for food and drink, will more easily master his other passions. An abstemious man is not apt to be guilty of serious moral delinquencies. He who is accustomed to deny himself in the enjoyment of food, a pleasure natural to him, will experience little difficulty in abstaining from other unnatural and sinful gratifications. Look at those heroes of virtue who gave practical proof of possessing the highest moral courage, did not they all fast most strictly? St. Bernard and St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa and St. Veronica, did not they all fast, in order to attain moral strength and fortitude?

3d. Consider that fasting helps men to become saints. How many other virtues one practises when one fasts! When you fast, you practise self-denial and temperance, you practise them in obedience to the precept of the Church or the Rule of your Order, and your obedience is actuated by motives of humility and of the love of God; moreover in fasting you perform an act of fraternal charity, inasmuch as you benefit your neighbor spiritually by the edification your good example gives him, and you benefit him physically by giving him the aliments you deny to yourself. See what a fair garland of virtue is

woven round the act of sacrifice that is performed every time that you fast. Hence the saints always made use of fasting as a stepping-stone to sanctity. But here let me warn you of a danger to be avoided. St. Ambrose says: "Of what avail is it to exhaust the body with fasting, if at the same time you indulge the heart in guile and malice?" Mere abstinence from food does not render a man holy; spiritual fasting is a necessary accompaniment. Fasting must not be confined to the mortification of the palate, but extend to all the five senses; and the means to be employed in order to combine spiritual fasting with corporal fasting for the future, so as to render your period of fasting salutary to yourself and acceptable to God, must be seriously considered, and this will form a fitting conclusion to the present meditation.

JANUARY 12TH.

ON DEATH.

Imagine, my soul, that the supreme moment has come when in all your members you feel the dread approach of death, when the labored breath comes more and more painfully from your heaving breast, when all begins to grow dark before your eyes and your soul stands trembling and fearful on the threshold of eternity. Then having fully realized the solemnity of that awful moment, look up to the cross and listen to the words your Saviour utters in a similar situation: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (St. Luke xxiii. 46.) Meditate upon this, that you may learn of Jesus how to die.

1st. If the terrors attendant upon our last moments are to a certain degree to be mitigated to us, we must learn of Christ how to die. See, He commends His parting soul to His heavenly Father. He no longer looks around Him for earthly consolation. His dying eyes are fixed upon eternity, He looks forward into the world to come and there to His consolation He beholds His Father, the Father who

was well pleased in Him as His beloved Son, the Father to fulfil whose will was His meat and drink, the Father whom He glorified throughout His whole life, and the thought of that Father to whom He commends His spirit makes death easy to Him.

Supposing, my soul, that suddenly a clot of blood formed on your brain, that you felt the cold hand of death upon you, would the thought of your Father in Heaven be a consolation to you in your agony, or would it only awaken the reproaches of your conscience? Would it smooth the way for you through the dark vale, or invest it with greater terrors? Could you tranquilly say with Christ: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit?

2d. Consider that in the moment of death our Lord does not give a single thought to His body; He does not trouble Himself as to what treatment it will receive after His soul has departed, although that body was indeed deserving of the highest respect; consider how, on the contrary, in order that He may be an example and teacher to us up to the very last, He thinks only of what concerns His soul, He commends it to His heavenly Father. Alas! poor miserable mortals, they know as little how to die as they do how to live! They are troubled and anxious about all manner of earthly matters and paltry concerns; they are most solicitous in regard to their body, which soon will become the food of worms; whilst their soul, which ought to be of more value, more consequence to them than the whole world, because it may be lost, lost for ever in the hour of death, is the last thing to which they devote their thoughts. No, learn of Christ what ought to be your primary solicitude in your last moments, yet do not postpone this until death draws near, but consider:

3d. That although you may at present be in the prime of life, your chief study should be to learn the art of dying well. The best means thereto lie in the words on which you have been meditating to-day: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Live therefore from this time forth

in such a manner that you would be able, if death overtook you, wheresoever or whensoever it might be, to utter these words and find in them your comfort. And so it will be with you, as you saw in the first point, if you too are a son in whom the Father is well pleased, and if you also have always made the care of your soul your first and principal care. And in order to keep constantly in mind this twofold duty, recall to your memory as often as possible the thoughts suggested to you in this meditation, and repeat devoutly the words: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. This you ought especially to do on three several occasions: First, every night when you lie down to rest, for you do not know whether you will awaken again in this world, and you ought to compose yourself to sleep in such dispositions as not to feel any terror should you never rise from your bed again. Secondly, repeat them every time you go to confession, for you know not whether that time may be your last, and you ought to make your confession as if it were, in fact, your last. Thirdly, repeat them whenever you receive Holy Communion, for it may be your viaticum that you are receiving, and you ought always to communicate so worthily, so devoutly, with such recollection of heart as if the Communion you are making were either your first or your last.

JANUARY 13TH.

ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

It is night. Silence reigns in the star-bespangled heavens and not a sound breaks the stillness in Bethlehem, David's royal city. All is at rest; all are wrapped in slumber, except the Infant Jesus who so lately came into the world; for Him there is no repose. The innocent divine Child is roused out of sleep, and Joseph and Mary, filled with alarm and anxiety, depart hastily, taking with them their dearly loved treasure whom the cruel Herod will seek to destroy, never resting until they have crossed

the frontier. Represent to yourself vividly, my soul, this Holy Family, poor, alone, fleeing under cover of night to the land of Egypt. Then consider:

1st. How easy it would have been to divine Omnipotence to baffle Herod's murderous designs; divine Wisdom could have found means enough to secure the safety of the Child Jesus in Bethlehem, but it was the will of God that even as a young infant the Saviour of mankind should be obliged to flee into a foreign land, thus teaching us by His own example that we are only strangers and pilgrims on earth, that we have here no abiding city. From the cradle to the grave Jesus preached this doctrine to us; the manger in which He was laid at His birth was not His own, and the grave that received His lifeless body was the property of another; it was to a strange land that He fled to escape Herod's sword, and when He returned to His native country it was in the condition of an alien that He lived there, for He had not where to lay His head.

O my soul, contemplate your Saviour thus fleeing from the land of His birth! Learn of Him that you are a stranger here below, that Heaven is your true home! Do not let your heart cling to any particular place! Go cheerfully wherever obedience requires you to go; it is not for you to feel yourself thoroughly at home in any place on earth; everywhere, like your Redeemer, you must feel yourself a stranger and an exile.

2d. Consider that Jesus, who with one word could have defeated all Herod's wrathful designs, nevertheless evaded his anger by flight, in order to teach us that we should not withstand the violence of angry men by force, but should rather yield to it and elude it; for that often proves the means of calming one who is irate, whereas resistance would only fan the flame of fury. Do not consider that you demean yourself by thus taking flight, any more than Jesus demeaned Himself by the flight into Egypt. It is no disgrace, no shame, but consummate prudence to get out of the way of a wild beast, and every one who is inflamed with anger has more or less of the savage animal

about him. Why, then, my soul, have you hitherto acted so differently from your Saviour: why have you not at once given way before wrath and sought to escape from it?

3d. Consider that the flight into Egypt took place without any delay, and very shortly after the birth of Jesus, and learn from this that you too must needs take flight at once and without hesitation, as soon as Christ is born in you by means of the holy sacraments of Penance and of the Altar. For as Herod in his rage desired to slay the divine Child as it were in the cradle, so the devil seeks, as soon as Christ is born again in you, to stifle the new birth at its very outset, before it has time to grow and gain strength; hence it comes to pass that Christians are sometimes subjected to great and grievous temptations immediately after they have approached the sacraments. Wherefore, my soul, see that you take flight; flee from undesirable companions and occasions of sin; flee to Egypt; take refuge in solitude and in prayer. Do not allow yourself to sink to sleep; start up at once, as Joseph did, on hearing the angel's warning voice; take flight, and the devil will be as completely foiled by your flight as Herod was by the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt.

If the second Sunday after the Epiphany falls later, the gap thus made may be filled up by the meditations which drop out of the yearly course to make way for meditations for the festivals, or else by those of the week following any Sunday after the Epiphany which may not have a place in the calendar that year.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON WHAT MARY TEACHES US AT CANA.

How touching and how deeply significant is the Gospel of to-day! Mary appears for the first time in Jesus' public life, and she shows herself at once in her exalted character of our Advocate, a character which will be hers as long as time shall last. See how, filled with anxiety, in the kind intention of sparing her entertainers from feeling embarrassment, she appeals to her divine Son, whispering to Him in a tone of entreaty: "They have no wine." (St.

John ii. 3.) Place this pleasing, this touching scene before your mind's eye; you will find in it abundant matter for meditation.

1st. Consider that Mary does not inform any of the other guests of the deficiency in the supply of wine, or complain of it to the bride and bridegroom; she only whispers it to her Son, without attracting the notice of others, in order, as the seraphic Doctor St. Bonaventure asserts, to show that she is actuated by that true charity which refrains from mentioning the needs of others without necessity to those who have it not in their power to relieve them. For a complaint of that kind would rather arise from impatience, or a wish to disparage others, than from zeal inspired by charity. How many we see around us who are far from following the noble example Mary sets them. The faults and defects of their neighbor only furnish them with a pretext for bringing undue charges against him, letting out his secrets, and instead of feeling compassion for him as Mary did, and thinking what can be done to remedy his defects and deficiencies, they only take occasion to depreciate him and get him a bad name without any necessity.

2d. Consider that Mary, as soon as she remarks that the supply of wine is running short, does not wait until it is entirely exhausted, and the givers of the feast can no longer conceal their confusion, but kindly prevents matters from coming to the worst, and unnoticed as well as unnoticed, provides aid for the unfortunate bride and bridegroom. What a beautiful example for you! See, whosoever you remark some defect in a brother or sister Religious, whether as regards temporal or spiritual concerns, O do not wait until the evil has reached its climax and is apparent to everyone, but rather apply yourself to consider what can be done to remedy it; begin at once to pray for the soul thus afflicted; adopt measures to prevent the matter becoming worse, and if you can do this, as Mary did, unnoticed and unobserved, you may look forward with confidence to the reward promised by Him who seeth in secret.

3d. Consider that Mary goes at once direct to the right source whence assistance shall come; she goes to her divine Son. To Him and only to Him does she disclose her wish, and that she does in such wise that she does not appear to require Him to work a miracle; she does not ask with impetuosity; she simply leaves our Lord free to afford assistance or withhold it, as He sees best. She says: "They have no wine." Learn from this, my soul, how you ought with all simplicity to lay before God in secret prayer the many desires and cravings that arise within your heart, and then leave it to His wisdom and goodness to fulfil them or not. That is the best course to pursue, for it will not only preserve you from a vast amount of disquietude, discontent, complaining, vain hopes, and longings; it will also prove the means of attaining your end most surely and most speedily. For if your wish is pleasing in God's sight, He will grant you the fulfilment of it, as He did in regard to Mary's desire at the marriage of Cana. But mark one thing: The Lord did not grant even what Mary asked immediately, but only when His hour was come. Here again is a very useful lesson which you will do well to lay to heart.

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE REASON WHY JESUS' FLIGHT WAS INTO EGYPT.

The Holy Family on their flight into Egypt had to journey for seven days across the desert of Sur, and up to the present time two lofty granite pillars mark the spot where they crossed the boundary line between Asia and Africa. Who could enumerate the hardships and privations which the Holy Family had to endure on the way through the desolate wilderness! And when you contemplate them following this difficult and toilsome route, do you ask, my soul, whether it was by chance or deliberate intention that Jesus chose for His flight this troublesome

journey to Egypt in preference to any other? Unquestionably it was with intention, for only consider:

1st. Although the whole world belonged to our Lord, although He could have made choice for His exile of the land of the wise men, where He would assuredly have been received with open arms and treated with the utmost respect, yet He fixes upon Egypt in particular, although the journey thither presented such great difficulties, and where He could only dwell as a despised alien, in poverty and obscurity. Do you not, my soul, see herein a fresh manifestation of the self-denial, the renunciation of the divine Lord, which He practised from the very first moment of His entry into the world and continued to practise in His every act until His death upon the cross?

Shame upon you, O my soul! In a holy spirit of self-sacrifice, out of love for you, Jesus, when fleeing from His native country, chooses for the place of His exile the land where the greatest suffering, the utmost contumely awaits Him, and yet you desire, fleeing as you are from the world, always to live in that place, to occupy that part where you will have the least suffering, the most enjoyment, the minimum of work, the maximum of leisure; where you will meet with the fewest rebuffs, the most numerous marks of esteem. Is it not to be feared that your flight is not being made in the right direction?

2d. Consider that Jesus, by His flight into Egypt, showed Himself at once in His character of Saviour of the world. No nation was at that period so given over to idolatry as the Egyptians were; they even worshipped a heifer as their god, and were sunk in the most degrading superstition. And it is to this very people that the Redeemer goes for refuge. He who is the true God goes to the land of the false gods. He, the Light of the world, goes into the kingdom of darkness, of superstition. Born in the land of Judea, the divine Child now flies to the heathen, for He is sent to redeem both Jews and Gentiles. Consequently immediately upon His entry into the land of Egypt all the idols fall down, according to the prophecy of Isaias. (xix. 1.) "Behold the Lord will enter into

Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence." What a singular thing! The devil seeks through Herod's instrumentality to compass the death of the divine Child, and what is the result of his efforts? The holy Child retires into Egypt, in order to destroy the dominion of the devil in that land, where he reigned supreme. O my soul, if at any time you are called upon suddenly to quit a position which use has rendered congenial, a calling which years have endeared to you, a place of abode that you delight in, do not murmur; you know not what may be the wise designs of God, any more than St. Joseph suspected how all-important it was that he should direct his flight to the land of Egypt.

3d. Consider, in order to realize more completely the fact of the flight, the words of the prophet, which were accomplished during that flight: "Waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness." (Is. xxxv. 6.) Tradition relates that the Holy Family took up their abode in the vicinity of Heliopolis, and that a spring welled out of the ground to afford them refreshment; this spring is now known as the holy well, and has given its name to the city hard by. Thus the words above quoted: "Waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness," were literally fulfilled; and not only literally but figuratively as well. For this fount of water is Christ, and the streams that issued from it and fertilized the desert, are the holy monks and anchorites who by their presence in that very tract of country caused Egypt, which before Christ was notorious for its idol-worship, to become after Christ a focus of light to the whole Christian world. O what a remarkable fact is this! Herod, when seated on the throne of Juda, persecutes and seeks to destroy the new-born Christ, compelling Him to fly for refuge to Egypt, and two hundred years later we see the occupant of the imperial throne of Rome, the Herod of his day, persecuting the infant Christian Church, forcing it again to fly to Egypt; and Egypt is thus peopled by holy monks and anchorites who from thence pour forth a vivifying stream that flows to all the ends of the earth.

Therefore praise and adore the wisdom of God to conclude your meditation to-day. What, if looked at from an earthly standpoint, could be more pitiable, more abject than the Holy Family flying fearful and alarmed across the desert to the frontier, and yet what, if viewed by the eye of faith, could be more truly great, more rich in blessings than that flight? Wherefore let there be no more murmuring, but on the contrary, childlike submission to the designs of God's providence, strange and mysterious as they may oftentimes appear.

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON ST. JOSEPH'S CONDUCT WHEN CALLED UPON TO RETIRE INTO EGYPT.

Picture to yourself, my soul, as forcibly as you can, what St. Joseph's feelings must have been when, in the middle of the night, the command which he had not been led in any wise to anticipate: "Arise and fly into Egypt" (St. Matt. ii. 13) was communicated to him. Ask yourself what you would have done in a similar case; and then proceed to see what St. Joseph did, and meditate upon it.

1st. Joseph complies with the command immediately and with unruffled composure, just as if he had been told to do something quite ordinary and which he had known for a long time that he would have to do. He does not inquire the reason of the command; he does not think within himself: There is no need to hurry; God surely will protect His own Child from the malice of man. Nothing of the sort; Joseph fulfils the behest of the angel simply and obediently, as if he were the most perfect Religious. Learn from this, my soul, learn from Joseph what is real perfection in the Christian and pre-eminently in the Religious; learn to obey the orders of your Superior even if brought to you in the night, without deliberation, without hesitation, without a single question; obey literally

and in all simplicity, although the command may perhaps seem rather extraordinary and unaccountable, as the flight into Egypt must have appeared.

2d. Consider that the angel bade Joseph abandon everything, leave everything just as it was, and only fly at once with Mary and the divine Child. That Joseph did exactly. He did not wait to pack up his household goods; that would have delayed him too long; he did not load the ass with all manner of things that would be wanted for the journey, for had the animal been heavily laden it would not have been able to go quickly enough; no, just as he was, so he started on the way, satisfied if he could accomplish his one object, that of placing the Child in safety. How striking an example Joseph affords in this respect of a perfect Religious! A good Religious does not set out on his flight from the world taking with him a whole cargo of this world's goods; he does not retire to the desert solitudes of Egypt and refuse to leave behind him the pleasures, the amenities of social life, a few pet possessions of earth. No, as he is, so he departs, with nothing more than usual about him; if he can only insure the safety of Christ all the rest may go to rack and ruin, and the fewer the earthly encumbrances wherewith he burdens himself, the more rapidly, the more readily he will proceed on his way with the Infant Jesus. Wherefore, my soul, strip yourself this very day of all superfluities. Look round your cell; pass in review the thoughts and desires of your heart; think of the range you allow yourself in your reading, your correspondence, and you will find much useless ballast which must be thrown overboard if your little bark is to be kept from foundering before her course is ended. If once you can but say: Now I possess nothing but Christ, then you are flying with Joseph, flying in the right direction, and being thus free and untrammelled by earthly things, you will experience little difficulty in winging your flight upwards to Heaven.

3d. Consider that the angel did not leave St. Joseph at liberty to choose whither he would fly, but indicated to him the land of his exile. Here again Joseph is the model

of a perfect Christian, a perfect monk. No doubt many other places might have been chosen more pleasant, more easy of access, and to all appearances safer places of refuge for the divine Child than the distant, the unknown, the idolatrous land of Egypt. But the angel bids him retire thither, and Joseph obeys without contradiction, without a murmur, without a moment's hesitation. O my soul, learn from this to go cheerfully, joyfully whithersoever God and holy obedience send you. Joseph's wants were supplied in the desert of Egypt; the trees bending over him gave shade and refreshment; water sprang out of the rock to quench his thirst. Mark this: In that very place where you think you will find a desolate wilderness, God will give you as the reward of your obedience repose, tranquillity, and rich graces, for which you would have looked in vain in the place which you might have chosen for yourself.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE DEATH OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to contemplate, with feelings of tender compassion, the unhappy fate of the children of Bethlehem, the innocent babes whose blood is shed by the sword of the barbarous executioners. Imagine that you hear the piteous wailing of the innocent victims, the sound of which is however drowned by the lamentations and heartrending cries of the unfortunate mothers, who, almost beside themselves with grief, fill the air with their woful shrieks. And when you shudder at the awful scene before you, then consider:

1st. That this unheard-of cruelty was due to the ambition of a single individual. For fear lest he should be deprived by the divine Child of his unstable throne, from which death sooner or later must inevitably drag him; for fear lest the Infant of Bethlehem should snatch away

the perishable crown encircling a brow already doomed to destruction, Herod loads his soul with a weight of blood-guiltiness such as has never been known before, sacrificing to his ambition the blood of innocent babes, which even the lowest savages respect.

Learn hence how fatal are the consequences of ambition. It is a vice that works the greatest mischief everywhere. Not only does it cause Bethlehem to resound with the accents of grief and lamentation, it is the curse, the ruin of every community. One ambitious member will overthrow the peace, the tranquillity of a whole family, of a whole convent, nay, even of a whole nation. Therefore examine yourself carefully to-day, to see whether any trace of this dangerous vice lurks within your heart.

2d. In order to discover a brighter side to this melancholy event, consider that the whole life of our Lord upon earth was like a procession to the Mount of Calvary. As our object in joining a procession is to implore of God forgiveness of sin, deliverance from all manner of evils, the bestowal of graces temporal or eternal, so this was the aim, the mission our Lord proposed to Himself on the *via crucis*, during His lifelong pilgrimage. And as in our processions the young children walk first, as if for the purpose, as it were, of conquering the heart of their heavenly Father by their innocence, so Christ, our High Priest, sent on the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem first of all, as if to intimate to His eternal Father that the supplicatory and propitiatory procession of His Son upon earth had already commenced. They, the Holy Innocents, were privileged to inaugurate the procession; their innocent blood, their atoning blood was first of all to knock at the celestial portals long closed against mankind; they advanced foremost to the charge, thereby showing that the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. Then, after the Holy Innocents, Jesus, the great High Priest Himself, follows, and with Him the whole of the clergy, the apostles and disciples, the thousands of martyrs, who all, joining the great crusade, took the kingdom of Heaven by storm at the price of their blood.

3d. Finally consider that in a procession the Christian laity follow the clergy, and thus we, in the glorious pilgrimage of suffering from earth to Heaven, of which the Holy Innocents formed the van, should walk in the footsteps of the Priests who have already made the sacrifice of their blood for the faith, and of the apostles and holy martyrs. Yet lay this to heart: He who would take part in this procession must know how to suffer; he must not shrink from sacrifice, poverty, pain, contempt; he must not seek to shirk the cross and suffering; he must take all upon his shoulders, patiently, as if he were one of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem, who, slaughtered like lambs, opened the long procession of suffering pilgrims who tread the path of sorrow that leads to Heaven.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE RETURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY TO NAZARETH.

For seven long years the Holy Family had to remain in the land of their exile. Picture to yourself, my soul, how these holy persons used to sit in the quiet evening hours, before the door of the cottage they had constructed for themselves in that foreign land, and look with longing in the direction of their own dear country, that was so far, far away; thinking of Jerusalem, the glorious city of their God; of Nazareth, the pleasant village where they had dwelt; of Bethlehem, the place of their birth. Try to realize the yearning of their hearts, the melancholy that weighed on these exiles banished from their home, and consider:

1st. That Joseph does not know how long he will have to remain in misery and exile with Mary and the divine Child. The angel had simply told him that he was to wait there in Egypt until further orders were communicated to him. Whether his sojourn was to be for a longer or a shorter period was not told him; he was to wait, and

acquiesce patiently in doing so. "Be there until I shall tell thee." (St. Matt. ii. 13.) Here is an excellent lesson for you, my soul. Learn from St. Joseph to accommodate yourself to a disagreeable position, an uncongenial office; to submit resignedly to whatever crosses and sufferings may be your lot. For how long? Just as long as God pleases, until such time as He may by the lips of His messenger announce to you the change that is to be made. Or do you consider yourself better than Joseph, worthy of more consideration than Mary? Thus to wait patiently and passively until the Lord sees fit to send relief is required of all the children of God, of all His elect, and it will in the end be for their eternal salvation. Only consider:

2d. That God has always acted thus with His servants. He commanded Abraham to offer his only son to Him in sacrifice. Imagine the intense grief that must have rent the paternal heart of the patriarch. And how long was this friend of God to be tortured by the prospect of having to execute the behest, which, moreover, all the time God proposed to withdraw? "As long as I please, until I shall tell thee otherwise." He permitted Joseph to be cast into prison, although he was entirely guiltless of the crime attributed to him; and how long, O God, is this young man, Thy favored servant, to languish in the dungeon? "As long as I please, until I shall tell him." The innocent Susanna was actually condemned to death; it was not the will of God that she should die, but how long then, O Lord, wilt Thou suffer this unhappy woman to endure in anticipation the agonies of death? "As long as I please, until I shall tell her." So long, until I see fit to change Abraham's grief into gladness, to convert his sorrow into a blessing for himself and his posterity; so long, until I see fit to raise Joseph from the dungeon to the royal throne, and to send Daniel to rescue Susanna and render her more honored than before. And you, my soul, find waiting so irksome! You are assailed by this or that temptation, you are oppressed and persecuted, you experience aridity and tepidity at your devotions, and you imagine that God has forsaken you. How long, you

ask with a sigh, am I to endure this or that cross? Just as long as it is God's will that you should endure it; meanwhile submit to it patiently; wait as Joseph waited, and you will see how all will turn out for your good; remember the saying: "After the storm comes sunshine," but God is near in the storm as well as in the sunshine.

3d. Consider how delighted Joseph and Mary must have been when at length the angel announced to them that they might return to the land of Israel; but yet a certain sadness was mingled with their joy. They rejoiced, in that their banishment was at last ended; they rejoiced in the anticipation of soon seeing their beloved country again; they rejoiced above all to think that at Nazareth it would be within their power to afford the beloved Child Jesus many advantages which He could not have in a strange land. Yet in spite of all this consolation not a little sadness mingled in Mary's joy, for she knew that she was about to journey with her innocent Child to a country where His own would not receive Him, a country where hatred and persecution, disdain and derision awaited Him, where a crown of thorns, a cross was in store for Him. Then indeed the sharp sword spoken of by Simeon pierced Mary's virginal soul; learn from this, that no joy is perfect here below, and that the children of God must not expect to find it so.

Let this be the fruit you carry away from your meditation to-day; that you bear willingly the solemnity, the quiet happiness of this penitential time. Now is the time of mourning and weeping, and blessed—so our Lord declares—are ye that weep now. (St. Luke vi. 21.) This is the lot of the Christian here below. But the day will come when we shall return out of the Egypt of this world to the land of promise, and, provided we have not abandoned ourselves too much to the pleasures of Egypt, this land of our exile, it will not be as Joseph and Mary, with joy tempered by sadness, but it will be with fulness of joy that we shall enter its blissful gates.

**FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.**

ON THE NAME OF NAZARENE.

Nazarene was a name given to our Lord from His native town, and it figured in the superscription placed above Him on the cross. A Nazarene means "one that is in bloom." The divine Child Jesus was indeed a fair and fragrant blossom from the paradise above. How welcome, how beautiful a sight it is when, after the long, cold winter, the first blossoms appear on the trees and shrubs! Now no less welcome, no less hopeful a sight, after the long spiritual winter that had prevailed upon earth, was the appearance of the divine Child in Nazareth. The prophets foretold of Him: "He shall be called a Nazarene" (St. Matt. ii. 23), and they foretold it with truth and justice.

1st. Consider that the blossom of fruit-bearing trees is white, or white and red. The spouse in the Canticles (v. 10) says of the Redeemer: "My Beloved is white and ruddy." He is white because He is perfectly pure in body and soul, a mirror without spot or flaw; and red because He is consumed by ardent charity. "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" Thus defiantly the Nazarene could speak to His enemies on account of His immaculate purity, and His garments were dyed a deep crimson on Olivet and on Calvary. My soul, see that you also are a Nazarene, white by reason of the unstained cleanness of your conscience, red in the glow of burning love. And if it so be that you do not display these colors, O delay not, but seek this very day to wash your soul white and clean in the laver of contrition and of penance; kindle by means of Holy Communion a fervent love for Christ, in order that of you too, my soul, your Heavenly Bridegroom may be able to say: "My beloved is white and ruddy, a true Nazarene."

2d. Consider that the bloom of fruit is smooth, the

petals are tender, there is nothing rough or prickly about it, and the bees suck delicious honey out of it. In like manner our celestial blossom, Christ the Nazarene, is meek and gentle, most kind and compassionate. Never did one who was destitute or in distress, never did a sick man or one who was a sinner fail to draw from this blossom the honey of consolation, of mercy, of grace. And yet you, my soul, are rough and harsh, even repellent in manner towards your fellow men, and gall—not honey—drops from your lips. O lay aside this hard, surly, unamiable demeanor; become a Nazarene! Listen to the divine Nazarene, to the sweet, celestial Child, overflowing with gentleness and kindness; hear how lovingly He calls to you to-day: “Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”

3d. Consider that the blossom of fruit does not, like other flowers, grow out of the ground, but on lofty trees, and the higher it is the finer is the bloom. So the heavenly blossom, Jesus the Nazarene, has nothing in common with earth. He came down from Heaven. He felt Himself always a stranger upon earth, and nowhere did He flower in such perfection as when the blood-red blossom was seen upon the stem of the cross. Hence, my soul, you see that you are no true flower, but a weed in the garden of the Lord, if you cling to the earth, if you do not strive to rise aloft. Become a Nazarene to-day; break off once for all your connection with the miserable world; say to yourself in the words you repeat daily: *Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts. Rouse yourself then; the tree whereon your blossoms will unfold most plentifully, most beautifully, is ready at hand, and Christ Himself invites you to climb up on it, when He says to you: “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily.” Therefore do not rise up from your meditation to-day without having formed the resolution to take up some particular cross and carry it patiently; and if you do this daily, your soul will surely expand upon this tree of the cross, and become a glorious blossom, and thus you will, like your divine Master, deserve to be called a Nazarene.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS AT NAZARETH UNTIL THE
TWELFTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

To-day, my soul, go in spirit to the happy house at Nazareth, and contemplate the Holy Family, as they pursue their several avocations in blissful concord. Joseph is laboring in his workshop, the Blessed Virgin is occupied with the spinning-wheel on behalf of her divine Child, and Jesus, growing up a beauteous, winning child, busies Himself by His foster-father's side, in fashioning, with divine prescience, little crosses out of the odds and ends of wood that He picks up.

Sacred history records nothing concerning the life of our Lord during His boyhood at Nazareth, but our imagination can place before us a very attractive picture of that period.

1st. Consider that, if every child may be compared to a flower, that involuntarily unfolds its petals to the sun, if every child feels himself drawn by nature to God, the eternal Sun; if he learns to pronounce the name of God at the same time as that of his father and mother, and loves to hear of God, and be taught to clasp his little hands in prayer on his mother's lap; if he takes kindly to this knowledge, and drinks it in more readily than secular knowledge, such as reading and writing, what a delight it must have been to Mary to watch the progress of the divine Child. She saw Him of whom the Apostle says that "He was in all things like as we are, without sin," daily disclosing more of the fulness of divine Wisdom resting in Him, advancing in wisdom as in age, and during the spiritual conversations of Mary and Joseph, taking the part of a teacher rather than that of a learner! What can we imagine to have passed in the soul of the Child when He accompanied His parents to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and there heard the Holy Scriptures read aloud,

heard the prophecies concerning Himself, His birth, His Passion and His death! And when He knelt down to pray to His Father in Heaven—O my soul, can you ever tire of gazing at so fascinating a picture? If to behold an ordinary child at prayer, its tiny hands devoutly folded, its clear blue eyes raised to Heaven in the innocence of its heart, is so fair, so delightful a sight, what must it have been to behold the Child Jesus engaged in prayer! Wherefore you will do well to-day to impress this lovely image deeply on your mind, remembering the warning words: “Unless you become as this little child;” resolve that ere this day closes you will become a little child again, and pray to your God with the same childlike simplicity and piety as you did in the days of your childhood.

2d. If every child rejoices in the special protection of its Guardian Angel, whose guidance is often manifested in a visible manner, how gladly the angels must have surrounded the Child Jesus, partly with the object of protecting Him “lest He dash His foot against a stone,” partly in order to pay Him their tribute of veneration and adoration, and to derive edification for themselves from His conduct, from the admiration and astonishment excited by His wondrous humility, His incomprehensible self-abasement. Let us not forget that the angels had beheld this poor and lowly Child in all His glory and divine majesty; what then can they have thought, have felt, when they were present in the house at Nazareth and saw Jesus in such abjection! Strive to enter into their sentiments, my soul, and then unite with the angels in acts of adoration, and aspirations of ardent affection towards the divine Child.

3d. If every good child loves his parents more than any one else, and on the other hand is himself the greatest delight of those parents, what words can describe the love, the obedience, the attachment of Jesus to Mary and Joseph! What touching subjects for meditation present themselves to you, my soul, when in imagination you watch the sweet Child Jesus helping His parents at their work in the house at Nazareth. He who made the sea

and feeds the rivers, draws water from the well; He "whose fan is in His hand," who will thoroughly cleanse His floor, sweeps out the room where they habitually dwell; He who created the trees of the forest, and planted the cedars of Lebanon, gathers up the shavings from the floor of Joseph's workshop. What can Joseph and Mary have felt at seeing Him thus employed! Look upon the Child Jesus and blush with shame; be ashamed that in the pride of your heart you have fulfilled so grudgingly, in so unamiable a manner, work that is of a menial description, or that brings you no credit, which has fallen to your lot in the convent, in the course of your ministry, in the pursuit of your calling. Now at least make a resolution that from this day forth you will strive to please your Superior, and at the same time to please God, by your humble obedience, such obedience as that wherewith the sweet Child Jesus rejoiced the hearts of Joseph and Mary.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE HEALING OF THE LEPER.

In order to be able duly to appreciate the work of mercy performed by our Lord to-day on behalf of the man who was afflicted with leprosy, represent to yourself, my soul, that unhappy individual, covered with disgusting, offensive sores, an object of abhorrence to his fellow men, and an intolerable misery to himself. And yet how touching is the behavior of the unfortunate man!

1st. Consider in the first place his entreaty: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (St. Matt. viii. 2.) Although the malady he suffered from was excessively painful, although it rendered his appearance most revolting, and although the stench from it was unbearable, so that he naturally desired ardently to be delivered from so terrible an affliction, he did not proffer his request with any vehemence of manner, or any importunity. "If Thou wilt," was what he said. O how

admirable a choice of expression, how worthy of our imitation! This one sentence contains in itself all that is most perfect; it is a compendium of virtue. It expresses the firmest faith that our Lord can relieve him, if He so wills; it expresses the deepest humility, which acknowledges the suppliant to be wholly unworthy of the cure he desires; it expresses childlike resignation to the will of God, since, as Albertus Magnus says, the leper conforms his will entirely to the will of Christ in regard to the restoration of his health. Yet who could have blamed the unhappy leper if he had urged his entreaty with somewhat more impetuosity and persistence, since you, who profess to be a Christian, striving after perfection, have often done so in regard to far more insignificant sufferings, far lesser troubles?

2d. Consider our Lord's answer: "I will, be thou made clean."

Do you not see how greatly the leper's request pleased our Lord?—so much so as to induce Him instantly to rejoin: "Yes, I will what thou willest, and what thou askest so submissively." Had the leper proffered his supplication with less humility and more urgency, who knows whether he would so soon have heard the welcome rejoinder: "Be thou made clean." Now if you, my soul, were to think over attentively the times when your prayers have been graciously granted, you would doubtless observe that you have received the most speedy answer when you, like the leper, prayed with firm faith, profound humility, and childlike submission to the will of God.

3d. Consider the admonition our Lord addresses to the leper after He has healed him: "See thou tell no man; but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer thy gift." These words contain a threefold command: The leper is to attract no more attention to his cure, but only to report it to the priest, and offer to God a gift in thanksgiving. Hence you may learn a lesson, my soul! If God has bestowed on you some extraordinary grace, if He has granted your prayers in a special manner, if He has favored you with wonderful consolations or lofty inspira-

tions, do not attract attention to them, do not make a boast of them, only speak of them to the Priest, your spiritual Director, and let him decide whether they are really a gift from God, or whether you may not have been deceived in regard to them. And if these favors are really due to the grace of God, O then offer Him heartfelt thanks, and do not act as mendicants do, who whine in a piteous manner, and then as soon as they have received an alms, make off without a word of gratitude. Remember besides that an act of oblation is the best thanksgiving, and see that in return for every gift, every grace, every consolation, you perform an act of self-denial or of charity towards your neighbor, and thus for the favors God bestows on you you will also offer a gift, as we read in the Gospel for to-day that the leper did.

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE JOURNEY OF THE CHILD JESUS TO JERUSALEM.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to betake yourself in spirit to Jerusalem; on every road leading thither, from the north, the south, the east, and the west, you will observe numerous companies of pious pilgrims, going up to the temple upon Mount Sion to keep the Feast of the Passover. For the most part they form processions, singing psalms as they wend their way to the chosen city of David, and amongst them you will discern one fair as an angel, the Son of David, the divine Child Jesus. Place Him distinctly before your eyes and then consider:

1st. The holy joy, the profound devotion of this divine Pilgrim. If an earthly son rejoices to return to his parents' house after an absence of many years, how greatly must Jesus have rejoiced to be able again to meet His heavenly Father in His house, to go into the temple of God. And if at the sight of the saered city of David, and the magnificent temple on Sion's hill, the pious pilgrims

were deeply affected and shed tears of holy devotion, what words can describe the fervent devotion, the recollection, the edifying demeanor of the Child Jesus, the holiest, the greatest of all the pilgrims, who then went up for the first time to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. Doubtless all the other pilgrims in His company loved to see amongst them the beauteous boy and were edified by witnessing His devotion. Would that we who are Priests and Religious might serve as a source of edification, like the Child Jesus, and not of scandal, through our whole demeanor, our every movement and gesture, when we leave our Nazareth, that is, the place of our solitude and seclusion, and mingle with our fellow men on the highways of the world! St. Francis used to exhort his disciples: Let us walk through the busy town with such gravity and recollection as thereby to preach a sermon to all who see us.

2d. Consider the length of time that our Lord remained in the temple. The time which His parents, pious as they were themselves, allowed Jesus for His devotions was too short to satisfy Him. He would have preferred to remain, like Samuel, altogether in the house of His Father. There He was happy, there He felt at home, there the hours flew by only too quickly while He, a boy but twelve years of age, was at prayer. And can it be that you, who have grown to man's estate, you who have grown gray in the service of God, find the time long and wearisome which you spend in the house of the Lord? An hour in the choir seems to you almost an eternity! The time goes quickly enough when you are talking with世俗 in the parlor, but so slowly, oh so slowly when you hold converse with God! Whence is this? Why was it not so when you were young, when you were in the novitiate, during the first years of your life as a Priest? Do you perhaps feel no longer that you are in your Father's house?

3d. Consider the apparent disobedience of Jesus towards Joseph and Mary. He remains behind in the temple without their knowledge, at the risk of causing them real distress. Yet observe: He stays behind without their

knowledge in order not to be considered guilty of an act of disobedience, as He would have been had they expressly told Him to leave Jerusalem when they did, and not remain there alone after their departure. Joseph and Mary knew nothing of His intention, and Jesus left them in ignorance of it, because He had now to obey and to serve a higher, a greater Father, His Father in Heaven. How grand a lesson our Lord teaches you here by His example! For twelve years He is in subjection to His earthly parents, for twelve years He obeys them dutifully and humbly, but at the end of those years, when the time has come when it is a question of serving God, of promoting His praise and glory, even the best and holiest parents, even such parents as Mary and Joseph must take a second place. Nay, our Lord does not even shrink from causing them sorrow and anxiety for a brief period, in order to do more for the service of God. Here we see Jesus practising what He taught later on: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." (St. Matt. x. 37.) The example of our Lord's conduct in this respect when He was twelve years of age is a great consolation, and affords much peace of mind to the perfect Religious, who for the sake of serving God more perfectly renounced all inordinate affection for his parents and relatives; but for the half-hearted Religious, or for Priests who still retain too much attachment to "flesh and blood," and who consequently can never offer an undivided holocaust to their heavenly Father, it is a very serious and forcible warning and reproof.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON MARY'S SORROW AT THE LOSS OF THE DIVINE CHILD.

"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (St. Luke ii. 35.) This prophecy, uttered by the aged Simeon in the self-same temple wherein the Child Jesus, now twelve years of age, has tarried behind, is now sadly fulfilled! Picture

to yourself, my soul, the anguish and anxiety the holy Virgin endured during that night, the first which she had spent without Jesus for twelve years. It is impossible to describe her grief and her alarm during those sleepless hours while she waited with holy impatience for the first dawn of day, which would enable her to continue her search for the Child she had lost! In order to estimate aright the depth of Mary's sorrow, consider the following points:

1st. Her sorrow was great because her love was great. The dearer anything is to us, and the more our heart clings to it, the more sorrow we experience at its loss. Now what can a mother lose that is more precious to her, what can she lose from which it costs her as much to part, as her child? And now think of the affection with which Mary, the purest and holiest of mothers that ever lived on earth, clung to her divine Child, and you will understand how during the time in which her Child was lost she might well exclaim: "All ye that pass by the way attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow!"

If, my soul, it is a sign of the love we bear to anything that we feel such pain at its loss, test the love you have for Christ by the slight contrition you feel for the sins which separate you from Him, and you will see how poor and incomplete is the measure of your love for Him.

2d. Mary's sorrow was great because she valued so highly what she had lost. The loss of a glass bead does not affect us very deeply, whereas the loss of a valuable diamond or beautiful emerald causes us real concern. The more we value the object we lose, the more acutely we feel its loss. Now what was there higher, more precious on earth for Mary than the Child Jesus? Full well she knew that in Him she had lost not only the most beautiful and gracious Child on whom the sun ever shone, she had besides lost her God, her Saviour, her Redeemer. This was the reason why her sorrow was so intense, her distress so deep, although—do not overlook this fact—she herself was not in any wise to blame for His loss. If you, my soul, have frequently and through your own

fault lost Jesus, and yet have gone on living for days, for months, not to say years, without evincing any special regret, you may hence conclude with confusion of face and contrition of heart that your faith is indeed a feeble thing. For had you reflected within yourself in the spirit of faith: I have lost my God, my Redeemer. I have lost what is more to me than Heaven and earth, could you have remained so cool and unconcerned? The loss of a comparatively valueless book, or some other paltry possession will often cost a man his night's sleep, while the loss of God, the Supreme Good, does not disturb his serenity. How is this to be accounted for?

3d. Consider that Mary's sorrow increased every hour. At first she consoled herself with the hope of finding Him in this place or that, but when hour after hour passed, and she could not find the beloved Child anywhere, when night again fell, a long, sad night without Jesus, Mary's heart was immersed in a sea of bitterness and sorrow. How keen that sorrow must have been we may gather from the fact that even in the joyful moment when at last she caught sight of the Child whom she had lost, remembering all she had gone through she could not refrain from uttering the sorrowful exclamation: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" It was as if she would say: Thou knowest, O God of my love, that Thou art our Supreme Good, our riches, our sole consolation; that without Thee we are poor and miserable indeed. Thou art our life; we would rather die than be without Thee. Thou art our light, our sun, therefore we were shrouded in mournful darkness when Thou didst withdraw Thyself from our sight.

Arise, my soul, and look once more in this mirror! Were you conscious of any such feelings in your heart, did words expressive of such pain escape your lips, when you by your sins had lost Jesus, or when He apparently forsook you in order to try your faith? Examine yourself seriously, and consider this: If Mary experienced such acute sorrow because she was separated from Jesus for a few hours, and that by no fault of her own, what

words can depict the awful grief, the terrible lamentations of the damned, the gnawing worm of self-reproach that torments those souls who through their own sin have separated themselves eternally from Jesus! You too will endure this eternal sorrow for the loss of Jesus if you have felt no sorrow for His loss on earth. Wherefore close the meditation of to-day by a heartfelt prayer to Mary, entreating her for the sake of this one of her dolors to obtain for us and for all poor sinners sorrow, sorrow and deep contrition for the loss of Jesus.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE REASONS FOR THE LOSS OF JESUS.

Represent to yourself forcibly once again, my soul, the great misfortune, the harm, the misery, which the loss of Jesus and His grace occasions; learn to gauge it aright by the grief and distress which, as you saw yesterday, Joseph and Mary experienced when He was lost, and then examine into the causes which brought about that sorrowful loss.

1st. Consider first that the divine Child Jesus was not lost by His parents on the way up to Jerusalem, but in going down from Jerusalem. Observe this point attentively: As long as the pilgrimage of your life is in an upward direction, while you are journeying towards the heavenly Jerusalem, as long as you are animated by higher aspirations, by the eager desire to progress onward, you need entertain no fear that you will lose Jesus. But if you begin to grow lax and negligent in the spiritual life, if you begin to tend downwards, to consider venial sins of no account, the violation of the Rule a matter of little moment, then you are in the greatest danger of losing Jesus. Look into your own heart, and see whether your every fall into sin was not preceded by more or less indifference and lack of earnest striving to do right; then

warned by this meditation, return to-day to your former fervor.

2d. Consider that Joseph and Mary lost the divine Child because they believed Him to be in safe guardianship. The pious pilgrims travelled in well-regulated companies, men and women apart. Thus, Joseph thought the divine Child was with Mary, and on the other hand His blessed Mother imagined Him to be in Joseph's company. Hence trusting overmuch to probability, they made too sure of His safety. Here you see a second reason why Jesus is often lost. It is through false security. There are many who lose Jesus and His grace because they do not regard such a loss as possible, and they despise or at least underrate the danger that threatens them. Instead of working out their salvation in fear and trembling, as the Apostle bids them, they go on their way with as much self-confidence as if it were quite impossible for them to fall. Despite all the warnings they have received they think there is nothing wrong in making the acquaintance of this person or that; they consider that there is no peril for them in looking at dangerous persons of the other sex, or even in conversing in an intimate manner with them, for they are not weak, but strong; they tell themselves that it is after all no mortal sin to indulge their inclination somewhat more freely; and thus they gradually rock themselves to slumber in a false security; they play with fire until all of a sudden their soul bursts into flame, and Jesus Christ is lost to them. Now, my soul, acknowledge this yourself: when do you examine your conscience with an easier mind—at the close of the day when on rising in the morning you said confidently to yourself, all will go well with me to-day; to-day I shall be safe enough—or on the evening of the day at the commencement of which you humbly and not without timidity entreated our Lord and the blessed saints to grant you assistance and protection throughout the day?

3d. Consider that Jesus is lost in the bustling throng. Joseph did not lose the sweet Child Jesus in the little town of Bethlehem, on the way through the solitary, deso-

late wilderness, or in the quiet village of Nazareth; no, but in Jerusalem, whither the people flocked in great numbers from all sides, so that the town was very much crowded, there even the holy Virgin, careful and anxious as she was, lost sight of her divine Child. In the quietude of the cloister, in the solitude of your cell, in the retirement of prayer, in silence, reflection and recollection, you may rest assured that you will possess Jesus. But if you once begin to look with a longing eye beyond the walls of the convent which affords you such secure protection, if but for once you mix in the turmoil and tumult of the world, or if you admit that same world into the cloister or into your heart by indulging in idle, useless thoughts, in frivolous conversation or gossip, oh then you will soon have cause to lament bitterly and bewail the loss of Jesus, the loss of His consolations and of His grace.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND MARY IN THE TEMPLE.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the attractive and touching scene in the temple, when Joseph and Mary, wearied out and exhausted by their long search and their anguish and grief of heart, at last enter the sacred building. Just as they had almost given up all hope of finding the dearly loved Child, they unexpectedly descry Him, sitting in the midst of the doctors of Israel, hearing them and asking them questions. Contemplate this situation, and then meditate upon the dialogue which ensued between Jesus and Mary; it abounds in instruction for ourselves.

1st. “Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.” (St. Luke ii. 48.) Such are the words Mary addressed to Jesus. There is no reproach implied in them; no, they are really and truly an inquiry. When Mary all at once saw Jesus sit-

ting as a teacher in the midst of the teachers of her people, and knew that for that purpose He had abandoned His Mother and foster-father, nay more, was, as it appeared, entirely forgetful of their existence, a pang shot through her heart, a sudden fear and dread lest perhaps after all the hour had already come when Jesus, who up to that time had belonged exclusively to her and to St. Joseph, would leave them and devote Himself to the instruction and redemption of the world. That was the motive of her question: "Why?" Has it, she intended to say, really come to this already? This inquiry is the outcome of unspeakable affection; it is the expression of maternal anxiety and also of intense tenderness, for she qualifies the apparent asperity of her question by adding: "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Thou art our only treasure, our dearest possession, our all, and alas! to lose Thee, and now to have to part from Thee altogether, is indeed a hard trial. Endeavor, my soul, to fathom the depth of these words which Mary addresses to her Son; ponder upon their secret meaning, the tender solicitude they express; then proceed to consider the answer Jesus made:

2d. "How is it that ye sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (ver. 49.) Jesus takes up the latter part of Mary's speech, "we sought Thee," and replies gravely and kindly: "How is it that ye sought Me?" It is not necessary for you to seek your Child, as if He were to remain always with you, to be with you alone, as your fond affection would fain have it, for the presentiment that awakes within thy heart, O Mary, is quite correct; this Child does not belong exclusively to you, although you certainly have more claim upon Him than any one else; He is only confided to your loving care for a short time, not for always. This Child is not only to be found in the house at Nazareth, but in that one also which is the house of His Father. Thus you see, my soul, how Jesus prepares Mary and Joseph for the separation from Himself, in order that they may be able to acquiesce in silent submission to the will of their heav-

only Father, when He, to their great grief, asserts His right and claims His only-begotten Son for Himself. Our Lord's exalted destiny, His mission, His supernatural dignity are to-day made clearly apparent to His earthly parents.

What a deep, mystic signification lies below the surface of this brief dialogue! Consider further:

3d. Never were there upon earth two souls united by a closer, more tender affection than the souls of Jesus and Mary. But in the sight of both there is something more sacred than the love that binds them together; it is the will of their heavenly Father. This is announced by the divine Child to-day to His virginal Mother for the first time, and Mary submits in silence and resignation to the divine dictates, offering to God and to mankind the first sacrifice of her maternal heart. How much instruction you may find in this, and what a beautiful example for your imitation!

Now, my soul, you have contemplated in turn the five joyful mysteries of the holy Rosary. Does not each one contain in itself a plenitude of divine grace and wisdom? In conclusion recall this briefly to mind, in order that the meditations you have made upon the childhood and early years of our Lord may have the permanent effect of enabling you to recite the joyful mysteries of the Rosary with greater devotion, and more appreciation of their meaning.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

For a considerable time we have contemplated the events of our Lord's childhood, wandering as it were in a beautiful garden, and admiring the fragrant flowers that blossom around His crib. We will now turn our attention to graver subjects, and meditate upon truths of practical

importance for our salvation. In addition to your daily scrutiny of conscience, it is well at this season to make a more special examination. In order to convince yourself of the importance attaching to this practice, consider:

1st. The command God gave to Moses under the Old Dispensation. He enjoined upon him to make a laver of brass and place it before the altar and fill it with water, that the sons of Aaron might wash their hands and feet in it, that they might not die. This laver was provided with a mirror, in which those who washed in it might see themselves reflected. What a useful lesson for you! You are a Priest, a Religious. Several times in the week, nay even daily, you go up to the altar, not, as did the sons of Aaron, to offer incense only, but to receive the most sacred and adorable Sacrament, to celebrate the most sublime of all sacrifices. Now if the sons of Aaron were bound to wash themselves previously, lest they should be punished by death, can you venture to approach the altar without being cleansed by confession? Assuredly you cannot. But mark this: the brazen laver is provided with a mirror. "This mirror," St. Gregory the Great tells us, "is the law of God, His commandments, in which the soul surveys her conduct, and if she is conscious of the stain of any transgression, she washes it away." And will you, my soul, attempt to cleanse yourself in the dark, without so much as being able to see where the stains are? Would it not be folly to act thus, and is it not evident that as the mirror stood before Aaron's laver, so examination of conscience must precede confession, and is of essential importance?

2d. Consider, as St. Bernardin of Siena calls on us to do, that the examination of conscience is such a momentous matter, and the knowledge of sin is of such great consequence, for this reason, because it was for our sins that Jesus Christ died upon the cross. Reflect, my soul, on the unspeakable sufferings that your sins caused your Lord; picture to yourself the Garden of Olives, the prison in the courtyard of Pilate's house, the pillar of scourging, the way of the cross and Calvary itself; remember how in

each and all of these places Jesus, the tortured victim, bore the weight of your sins and endured so awful a chastisement for them. If after this you are not convinced beyond a doubt, how thankless, how shameless, how inexcusable it is to pay little heed whether or to what extent you are guilty of sin, never seriously to scrutinize your conduct, then indeed you have every cause for apprehension as to your spiritual state.

3d. Consider well and meditate upon this one truth more: God will judge us, and oh how terrible are His judgments! Even the Apostle Paul trembled at the thought of them. But God tells you of a way whereby you may escape the divine judgments, for He says: “He that judgeth himself with just judgment, him will I not judge.” He places it therefore within your power to avert from yourself the awful judgments of God; you can do so by accusing yourself impartially and truthfully in confession. But whatever you consciously withhold, that will be brought up against you at the tribunal of God, and a false or faulty confession serves greatly to aggravate His judgments. Do you not now see plainly, my soul, how all-important is the examination of your conscience, how upon it depends whether heaven or hell shall be your portion? For how is it possible for you to judge yourself justly, to accuse yourself impartially if you know nothing of yourself for lack of any thorough self-examination? Wherefore do not be deterred from this by the trouble it costs you, but repeatedly tell yourself: Either I must judge myself now to my salvation, or God will judge me to my condemnation. Surely this thought will have the effect of stimulating you to make a daily and rigorous examination of your conscience.

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE MOTHER OF DOLORS STANDING BENEATH THE CROSS.

To-day being the day of the week specially dedicated to our Blessed Lady, turn your eyes to Mary and behold her as she stands beneath the cross, her heart pierced with the sword of sorrow. Transport yourself in spirit to Calvary; place the whole course of the crucifixion before your mental vision; imagine yourself to be one of the bystanders and onlookers, and as such contemplate Mary while you consider the following points:

1st. In addition to the maternal love and faithful devotion which Mary manifested towards her divine Son until His latest breath, there is another characteristic that we cannot do otherwise than admire in her as she stands beneath the cross, and that is her virginal modesty and decorum. In spite of the intensity of her grief, not a word escapes her lips; not by a single gesture or attitude does she show outwardly what she feels. She stands there, as calm and recollected as if in very deed she was assisting at the first sacred function, the first solemn celebration of holy Mass; she utters no lamentations; she does not cry aloud in her agony; she bears silently the burden of her terrible sorrow, and only the tears that roll down her pallid cheeks testify to the heartfelt compassion she feels for her suffering Son.

O Mary, mirror of modesty and propriety, the fact that thou canst stand thus self-possessed beneath the cross of thy dearly beloved Son in itself abundantly proves thee to be indeed His Mother, and compels even His enemies and thine own to yield thee an awestruck reverence. Now ask yourself, my soul, when you stand beneath the cross, when you hear or celebrate holy Mass, is your deportment equally modest and decorous? Is the manner in which you recite the prayers, are your attitude and gestures, is your whole demeanor in keeping with the sanctity of the place, the solemnity of the moment? And if per-

chance unbelievers, your enemies and the enemies of your God happen to see you at such times, are they inspired with an involuntary feeling of respect, or is your behavior calculated to make religion ridiculous and contemptible in their eyes?

2d. Consider Mary's marvellous patience as she stands beneath the cross. She does not complain of the Jews, who have acted so cruelly, so shamefully towards her and her Son; no, she compassionates her misguided nation. She does not complain of the sinners for whose transgressions her Son has to suffer; she prays for them. She does not show any indignation at the conduct of the executioners and of the Pharisees, who wound her bleeding heart yet more deeply by their mocking sneers; she forgives them as her Son forgives them. There she stands like an immovable rock, buffeted by every billow of sorrow; she stands like a statue of patience, wrought in marble by the skillful chisel of the sculptor. Now, my soul, behold yourself in this mirror. Behold your gloomy countenance, your frowning brow; listen to your whining and lamentations whenever some slight cross is laid on you; and do you, who are of the sterner sex, who are perhaps a young man in the prime of life and strength, learn a lesson of this frail woman who stands beneath the cross steeped in anguish; learn a lesson of patience.

3d. Consider Mary's wonderful fortitude as she stands beneath the cross. The mother of the Machabees also displayed heroic courage when she valiantly encouraged her sons to endure terrible torture rather than break the commandment. Other mothers have seen their children dragged away to a martyr's death without flinching, but they are all surpassed by Mary when she stood beneath the cross. There she maintains her position for three long hours, beside the cross of shame whereon her divine Son, the Son whom she loves even unto death, is suspended; she stands face to face with an excited, a furious, a fanatical mob, exposed to the insolent, the contemptuous stare of a multitude composed of the lowest of the people, unable to shield herself from the eyes of the

Pharisees, whose envenomed glances betray the hatred that fills their hearts; she stands there, sharing her Son's disgrace, herself the object of contempt and mockery on the part of the barbarous executioners and rude soldiery; she stands there, I say, in indescribable majesty and dignity until Jesus has drawn His latest breath. O proud, vain child of man! In the presence of this valiant woman blush on account of your effeminacy, your cowardice, your weakness, which so often lead you, for fear of contumely and derision, to depart from strict, exact obedience to the Rule, from the rigid observance of fasting and silence, so that through weakness and human respect you speedily forsake the cross beneath which Mary continued to stand steadfast and strong as Samson.

As, my soul, you ought not to allow any Friday to pass by without devoting a short space of time to meditation on our Lord's Passion, so you will do well to consecrate a portion of your free time every Saturday to contemplation of the life of Mary, for you will thereby honor the Mother of God and undoubtedly you will derive great profit for yourself and assistance in your progress towards perfection.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

THE STORM ON THE SEA OF GENESARETH.

Place before your mind's eye the scene of the storm at sea depicted in to-day's Gospel. A great tempest arose in the sea of Genesareth, and the waves ran so high that they threatened to swallow up the boat in which Christ was present with His disciples. Apprehension and alarm might be read upon every countenance, yet amid the deafening noise of the wind, the roar of the boisterous waves, the cries of the panic-stricken disciples, Jesus is asleep in Peter's little bark as calmly and tranquilly as a child in its cradle to whom care is unknown. Keep this scene before your mind while you proceed to meditate upon its various points.

1st. Consider the violent tempest that arose. Jesus was upon the sea with His disciples, the disciples who were dearest to Him, yet the water becomes rough, the wind becomes a hurricane, their lives are imperilled, the fear of death seizes upon them, and all this, as St. Bonaventure remarks, is by our Lord's appointment. He permits this storm, according to the explanation given by St. Basil, in order that as He has manifested His omnipotence by many miracles on the firm land, so He wills to display that same power on the restless sea, thereby to prove and to confirm the faith of His disciples. Hence you, my soul, may learn a salutary lesson, conformably to the admonition St. Augustine gives us, that when on the stormy sea of this world a tempest of tribulation overtakes you, when you are tossed to and fro by the billows of opposition, persecutions, misfortunes, sickness and affliction, remember that the storm which buffets you has arisen by the ordinance or at any rate by the permission of God, and that it is for your good.

2d. Consider that Jesus is asleep during the storm. Jesus sleeps and leaves the disciples to toil in the midst of the tempest; Jesus sleeps and allows the disciples to be in the sorest distress and anxiety, and this He does for the purpose of confirming the faith of those who are still wavering, of affording them an occasion of imploring His aid with the utmost confidence, and, by succoring them at the moment of direst need, of inspiring them with greater trust for the future. Oh how advantageous was this sleep of our Lord, which awoke the slumbering faith of the disciples! Consider this well, my soul. Have you not often, when lashed as by a tempest, driven before the blast of poverty, of misery, of temptation, of persecution, imagined that your God must be asleep, whereas in fact you yourself were asleep? Your faith was slumbering, your trust in God was slumbering. Jesus only appeared to sleep, and it was because He saw your faith to be slumbering that He permitted your troubles, your persecutions, your calamities to reach a climax, that He might then wake you, and lead you in your greatest need with

firm faith and steadfast confidence to cry to Him: "Lord save me, I perish."

3d. Consider the prompt assistance given by the Saviour. As soon as the disciples call to Him He rises up, commands the winds and the sea, and there comes a great calm immediately. Here ask yourself, my soul, why the disciples did not go to their Master at once, why they wearied themselves out in the endeavor to save themselves, and only called on Him to interfere when they could do nothing more? Because their faith was still weak. They trusted too much to themselves, too little to Jesus, and only when their self-confidence broke down and their own efforts proved unavailing, did their trust in Jesus awaken. Not till then did they have recourse to Him and were saved.

How often, my soul, in the course of your life has it been so with you. How often in times of affliction, temptation, conflict you have labored in your own strength, tired yourself out in the endeavor to find relief, sought succor from friends and acquaintances, striven to cheat your woe by distractions, by reading. Yet all was in vain, the tempest only increased in violence. At length it occurred to you to seek help from our Lord in holy Mass, or kneeling before the tabernacle where He abides, or by a humble and sincere confession; and all of a sudden tranquillity ensued, the storm was stilled, the temptation ceased to trouble you. O you of little faith, wherefore did you not go at once to the Physician who alone could cure you?

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON PROGRESS IN VIRTUE AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD.

What a pleasing picture is this upon which you look, my soul, when you fix your eyes upon the Saviour, and observe how after His return from Jerusalem, dwelling in His parents' house, He grew and developed, exhibiting

from day to day greater loveliness, greater sweetness, so that it was truly said of Him: "Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man." (St. Luke ii. 52.) Let these words form the subject of your meditation today.

1st. Consider that the assertion that our Lord advanced in wisdom and grace is not to be taken literally, since we know that from the very moment of His birth He possessed continually all the plenitude of divine grace and wisdom. What we are to understand is that the light and glory concealed within shone out more and more from day to day, and the dormant Godhead, unfolding its splendor, became day by day more apparent beneath the veil of His sacred humanity. In you too, my soul, a divine germ is hidden; you also bear within you the sanctifying grace of the Most High, since on the day of your regeneration in the laver of baptism the Holy Ghost infused into you the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. These virtues ought to expand and exhibit themselves externally from day to day in a greater degree; you ought to grow in them daily, and daily those around you ought to see more clearly from your words, your actions, that your heart is the dwelling-place of our Lord and of His grace. Is it so with you?

2d. Or do you perhaps belong to the number of those who decrease instead of increasing? How many begin well! Supernatural grace daily grows and expands within their soul like a flower in the sunshine. Hence the daily increasing fervor of their devotion, hence their spirit of penance becoming week by week more manifest, hence their good works, more numerous as each month goes by. All at once however, a change comes over them, and they exemplify the sorrowful dictum of our Lord: "No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (St. Luke ix. 22.) To pass suddenly from the way of virtue to the paths of sin is far more dangerous, is far more likely to involve the soul in eternal perdition, than to walk from the very outset in the way of iniquity, for one who thus falls away has

a weighty responsibility; he has to answer for having misused the graces given him, whereas the ordinary sinner has not to do so. Wherefore be on your guard, and implore your Redeemer, who Himself advanced in grace and wisdom, rather to drive you forward with the whip of His chastisements, to lay upon you crosses and sufferings, than to permit you to recede, to decrease in grace, or even to lose it altogether.

3d. Consider that it is quite possible to decline in grace without completely deviating from the way of justice, and a great many Christians are found to do this. They do not entirely desist from their former striving after perfection, but they become careless about it; they do not lead a sinful life, but they are lukewarm, and that is a very perilous state; one step more and they fall, and then their destruction is imminent. There is a deep truth in what the Son of God says to the bishop in the Apocalypse (ch. ii. 4, 5): "I have something against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity—that is to say, thy early fervor has grown cold—Do penance, and do thy first works, or else I will come to thee and will move thy candlestick out of its place."

Cannot you imagine, my soul, that Jesus is addressing those words to you? Alas, where is your first charity! Think of the fervent devotion wherewith you celebrated the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the first time, and contrast it with your present coldness. Think of the zeal you displayed when you first entered your Order, and contrast it with your present indifference. Is this trading with the talent committed to you? Up then, do penance, perform once more your first works, that the Lord may not take your candlestick out of its place, that is, cast you away! Ask yourself seriously this question: Wherein, and to what extent have I advanced since the day of my betrothal to Christ until the present time? a period of perhaps ten, twenty, thirty years or even more, each year replete with graces innumerable with which you ought to have co-operated. Have I advanced in wisdom and in grace as I have advanced in age? Then do not conclude

this meditation without having carefully considered what you must do from henceforth, what means you will employ from this very day, in order at last to make solid progress in virtue.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON OBEDIENCE AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD.

To-day, my soul, you will do well to study awhile the private, domestic life of the devout family at Nazareth, contemplating more particularly the relations in which Jesus stands to Joseph and Mary now that He is no longer a child, but a youth, rapidly growing up to man's estate. Imagine that you see Him, obedient to every hint or sign from His blessed Mother, and submitting without the least opposition to all the orders of His foster-father. Compare your obedience with this mirror of obedience.

1st. Consider who it is whom Jesus obeys: Two of the beings whom He created. Thus God obeys man, the Creator obeys the creature, the supreme King of Heaven and earth obeys one of His subjects, a lowly carpenter. And do you, worm of earth, refuse to obey God in your Superior? You see Almighty God obeying mortal man, and you, a man yourself, find it difficult to submit to the will of a man, because you are, or imagine yourself to be, wiser, more pious, more virtuous, more intelligent than the individual who has a right to command you. Was not Jesus wiser than Mary? Yet He obeyed her. Was He not cleverer than Joseph? Yet He did not carry out His own views, but those of His foster-father. Learn therefore to-day from Jesus' example to obey humbly all those who have authority over you.

2d. In what does Jesus obey? Under some circumstances it is not only a pleasure, but an honor to obey. For instance, it was an honorable distinction and a delight for the Archangel Gabriel, when he was chosen to bring

the glad tidings to Mary. Now look in what respects Jesus is required to obey. He, the Son of the living God, performs all the menial household duties in the dwelling of a poor carpenter. He draws the water, cleans the house, and labors in the workshop. This He does, by whose word the heavens and the earth were created. Here you have an example of perfect obedience, and now you perceive in what the true Religious or the Christian who strives after perfection is required to obey. In everything, in small things as well as in great, in what is honorable as well as in what is contemptible and insignificant. Small things have their value in God's sight as much as great things. To take up a broom for the love of God is often a work of greater merit, as far as obedience is concerned, than to deliver a discourse which one's hearers applaud. Obey as Jesus obeyed in everything without raising an objection, and you will then be practising perfect obedience. He who seeks to choose what he will do loses all the merit of obedience.

3d. For how long did Jesus obey? For fully thirty years. During all those years He performed obediently the lowly duties of a carpenter. O my soul, can you fail to admire such obedience as this! See during what a long period your Redeemer atones by His obedience for the single act of disobedience of which our first parents were guilty. For thirty years Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, dwells in the humble, obscure cottage at Nazareth in a position of subjection, and yet you, miserable mortal that you are, if in virtue of obedience you are required to follow a calling which is not the one you would prefer, to fill a somewhat arduous post, to live in a place you do not like, cannot retain that post or remain in that spot for a few years without evincing very plainly by your expression and manner, by your words and actions, how galling you find the yoke of obedience.

No, my soul, after that fashion one cannot be happy, one cannot attain perfection, one can never reach one's goal. Either do not take a vow of obedience or else obey when God wills, in whatever He wills, and as long as He

wills. Let the resolution to act thus be the fruit of your meditation to-day.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE LOVE WE OWE TO JESUS.

Immerse yourself to-day, my soul, in the blissful ocean of the love of Jesus, the love which He exhibited to you and to all mankind, not in His bitter Passion and death—of these we will not speak at present—but in His lowly life at Nazareth. Behold He, whose eye is accustomed to gaze upon the glory and splendor of Heaven, He who from all eternity has enjoyed celestial felicity and the fulness of joy, He whom cherubim and seraphim laud and magnify in their unceasing song, now dwells in the humble cottage at Nazareth, lonely and joyless, unknown and despised. And for how long does He dwell there? For the space of thirty years. O incomprehensible charity! To me this appears a more amazing miracle than the wonder Josue wrought, when he commanded the sun to stand still. During thirty years, Jesus, poor and contemned for your sake, seeks to obtain your love, and would you withhold it from Him? Reflect, O unhappy sinner, on what it is that you are doing.

1st. Consider that you are guilty of the greatest folly. If a rich man were to solicit the love of a poor man; if one who is happy and fortunate were to strive to make himself loved by one who was unhappy and unfortunate; if a high-born noble were to endeavor to gain the affections of an outcast, would it not be consummate folly on the part of the poor man to thrust back the hand that would make him rich, sheer madness on the part of the miserable man to fly from the benevolent individual who desires to give him happiness, and utter stupidity on the part of the outcast to repel the advances of the nobleman who would raise him from the dust? Yet you are the poor

man who is so foolish, you are the unhappy being who acts like a madman. You are the outcast who is an idiot, if you, O man, do not return the love Jesus bears you, Jesus, who for thirty years labored to win your love, who is able and willing to make you rich, happy and great.

2d. Consider furthermore that you are guilty of the blackest ingratitude if you withhold your love from Jesus. How touching it is to read of the pious patriarch Jacob, who for fourteen long years labored in order to obtain the beautiful daughter of Laban as his bride; who, for the sake of winning Rachel, spent the best years of his life as a poor herdsman, exposed to burning heat and biting frost, enduring fatigue and hardships innumerable. What would the feelings of the patriarch have been if after giving such proof of his love he had met with no reciprocity of affection in Rachel? Such thanklessness would have been enough to change his ardent love into burning hate. Now Rachel was not guilty of such ingratitude, but you, my soul, are. Not for fourteen, but for thirty years Jesus has sought your love, for your sake He has endured infinitely more than Jacob did. He has borne hunger and thirst, cold and heat, labor and privations. He lived an exile, not like Jacob from an earthly home, but from His celestial country, and you remain cold, indifferent to such love! Strike your breast, ingrate that you are, feel if you have not a stone there in the place of a heart. But that is not all whereof you must accuse yourself.

3d. Consider that you are guilty of the grossest infidelity if you do not love Jesus. You have never at any time belonged to yourself. Ponder this well: You were in the power of the devil, you had incurred the penalty of hell. Out of the power of the devil our Lord ransomed you at the price of His blood; your Saviour seeking you in His ardent charity purchased you for His own by thirty years' labor as a carpenter. He won you at the cost of as much painful toil, He made you His own as legally as Jacob did Rachel. And what is more, you on your side have pledged yourself to return His love in all fidelity.

First of all you were affianced to Him in baptism, on the day of your First Communion you went out to meet Him, your heavenly Bridegroom, and for the third time you were betrothed to Him solemnly and for ever on your entrance into your Order, or when you received Holy Orders. And now do you not love Him? Woe betide you, faithless soul! You burn with guilty love for the world, for the things, the persons of earth, whereas in regard to your true Spouse you are cold and indifferent. Do you not hear the voice of the Lord, saying: "I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God" (Ex. xx. 5)? And supposing this jealous God should come, unexpectedly as a thief in the night, and find the flame of love in your lamp to have gone out—why then, faithless soul, you will share for ever the sad fate of the foolish virgins. No, my soul, this shall not be your lot. Do not rise from your meditation to-day without having lost yourself in the fathomless, boundless love of your celestial Bridegroom; without having, in the ardor of freshly enkindled charity, resolved to make a warm return of love so great, exclaiming with St. Augustine in accents of contrition: "Alas, why so late have I loved Thee, O my God!"

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD.

To-day, my soul, represent to yourself the pathetic, the touching scene when Jesus took leave for ever of the house where He had lived for thirty years with His parents, whose joy and delight He had been; took leave of His blessed Mother, who clung to Him more closely, who loved Him more fondly than all the world beside. Contemplate awhile the holy Virgin as with tear-dimmed eyes she gazes long and wistfully after her beloved Son, whom she knows to be going to meet a certain, an agonizing death, and then in spirit follow your Redeemer on His way to the

Jordan; observe how He mingles in the multitude who have come to John to be baptized, and consider what are the motives that induce Him to ask for baptism as they do.

1st. Jesus inaugurates His great work of redemption by an act of profound humility. With this intention He, the Lamb without spot, whose perfect purity surely exempts Him from any need of baptism, takes His stand amongst the sinners on the banks of the Jordan, beside dishonest publicans and uncouth soldiers, as if He were one of themselves. He comes to receive baptism from the hands of John, His precursor; thus the Teacher takes a subservient position to His disciple, the Master to His servant, God to a creature. O my soul, admire this profound humility which was the first reason for Christ's baptism, and learn from it that you cannot commence the work of your calling better, you cannot enter upon a new post in a more excellent manner, you cannot begin any undertaking of importance with greater hope of a blessing on your labors, than by an act of humility. It is the absence of such humility, it is the thoughts of pride which you have on the contrary entertained, it is the spirit of self-reliance which you have manifested on such occasions which have been the reason why so little blessing has attended your work, your accomplishment of the duties of your office and calling.

2d. Consider that Jesus first did Himself what He intended to teach others to do. This was the second reason for His baptism. He was about to preach penance and announce the forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament of Baptism; therefore, for the purpose of giving force to His precept by His previous example, He mingles in the crowd of penitents on the banks of the Jordan, and goes through the ceremony of baptism. There was no necessity for Him to do this, yet it gave weight to His words when He exhorted others to be baptized for whom baptism was absolutely indispensable. Hence learn, my soul, this wise practice, which a saint once mentioned as his greatest consolation in the hour of death; he had never, he said, enjoined on others to do what he had not previously done

himself. Not by your words alone, but pre-eminently by your example preach, admonish, warn, comfort, encourage others; and do not, like the Pharisees, lay upon other men burdens which you yourself do not so much as touch with one of your fingers.

3d. It was not for Himself that Jesus received baptism, but for us. He came to take our sins upon Himself, to do penance for them and atone for them; consequently He performs the first act of penance for them, standing in the waters of Jordan. This is the third reason for His baptism. He who is Himself sinless receives the token of forgiveness of sin in order to intercede for sinners. This fact contains a touching admonition for you, my soul. You have been cleansed in the Jordan of baptism, you have been delivered out of the stormy ocean of the world, and have run your bark into the safe harbors of the religious life, where you are comparatively sheltered from danger and from occasions of sin. You have no grievous burden on your conscience, yet you ought all the same to do penance, after the example of your sinless Saviour. Descend into the waters of mortification, sprinkle your members with the water of penance, moisten them with the tears of compunction on behalf of your unhappy fellow creatures, that you may have the right to entreat forgiveness of sins for them. Let not a single day pass without praying for sinners, without performing some act which may avail them. But see that you do this in a spirit of humility, remembering the beautiful words of St. Francis: “If God had given yonder criminal as many graces as He has bestowed on me, he would be a better man by far than I am.”

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE CONDUCT OF ST. JOHN, WHEN OUR LORD CAME TO
HIM TO BE BAPTIZED.

Picture to yourself, my soul, the indescribable delight that filled St. John the Baptist's soul, when all at once he saw Jesus standing by the Jordan, and, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, recognized in Him the Messias. Contemplate in spirit the holy contest that ensued between Jesus and John, when our Lord asked for baptism, and the precursor, struck with awe, refused it to Him.

1st. Consider how reverence and obedience struggled for the mastery in St. John's breast. He knew that the One who stood before him, asking baptism of him, was the promised Messias, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and how was it possible for him to baptize Him like an ordinary man, a sinner? Every feeling of reverence forbade this holy prophet to do so; he was conscious that he ought rather himself to be baptized by Jesus. Then on the other hand Jesus asked for baptism, nay, actually demanded it, and was John not bound, as a creature, to obey his Creator; was it not the duty of a servant to do his Master's bidding? Yet how could he do in obedience what sentiments of reverence prohibited? See, my soul, men of high principle are often thus divided against themselves when a charge is laid upon them which they feel themselves unworthy to fulfil, as St. John did in this instance. It was so in the case of St. Macarius, who out of reverence refused to take Priests' Orders; of St. Augustine, who considered himself utterly unworthy to be a bishop. With fear and trembling the saints used to approach the altar, ascend into the pulpit, take their seat in the confessional, whereas those who are imperfect eagerly press forward to undertake the work of the sacred ministry. The saints could hardly be prevailed upon to accept prominent positions in the Church, or in their

Order, positions which persons with no pretensions to sanctity deemed themselves well qualified to fill. Now, my soul, if strife arises within your breast between what obedience requires and reverence seems to command,—and it is a good sign when this is so—how are you to decide between the rival claims? This you will learn from what follows:

2d. “Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice.” (St. Matt. iii. 15.) Such is the sublime answer which Jesus gave to John in a similar case; it is just, He says, that I should humble Myself before thee, and that thou shouldst baptize Me out of obedience. On the one hand it became our Lord as the representative of the sinful race of men to perform this act of self-humiliation, and on the other, it was fitting that John should be the one to baptize Him; that the last and greatest prophet of the Old Dispensation should baptize the first and only Prophet of the New Covenant; that he who prepared the way should baptize Him who was Himself the Way, the Herald of the truth, Him who was very Truth itself.

Thus, my soul, you see the deep signification of the request Jesus made to John, a request which seemed so strange and incomprehensible to the veneration John felt for the Messias, and you also see how sorely he would have failed in his duty had he refused to obey out of feelings of reverence. Learn hence to obey in everything, and in doubtful cases always to give the preference to obedience, for thereby not only you are certain not to be wrong, but as a rule you do what is best and most useful, although, like John, you may not perceive this at first.

3d. Consider how Jesus, by allowing John to baptize Him, performed an act of the highest humility and of obedience. The first and lowest degree of humble obedience is when a man for the love of God obeys one who is placed above him; the second degree is attained by him who yields to one who is on a par with himself; the third and most perfect degree is reached by him who submits, as Jesus did, to one who is his inferior. O humble Jesus! how Thou puttest us to shame. How many there are

amongst us who will not even, like St. John, cheerfully submit to those above them, to their Superiors, while that they should rise to the second or third degree of humility is out of the question. Let us not conclude this meditation without having thought how, and when, and in regard to what we will from this day forth, mounting these three degrees of humility, do the will of our Superior in the first place, then that of our equals, and finally that of those who are inferior to ourselves.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON OUR LORD AT HIS BAPTISM, IN THE FORM OF A DOVE.

Go back in spirit, my soul, to that wondrous moment, and imagine that you behold the striking spectacle when the heavens opened above the head of Jesus as He stood in the river Jordan, and, as many of the Fathers assert, a bright halo of glory surrounded the Redeemer as in lowliness and humility He bent His head; listen to the words whereby the Eternal Father, speaking from above, so highly honored and magnified His Son; behold the Holy Spirit descending upon the Son of God, and consider:

1st. That upon the voluntary self-abasement of Jesus His exaltation now follows, and after He had of His own free will done penance on behalf of mankind, He now receives the solemn ratification of His mission, and consecration to the work of redemption through the Father and the Holy Ghost. Thus it always is in the kingdom of God; as shame follows upon self-praise, abasement upon self-exaltation, so on the contrary God is accustomed to glorify His servants in that very respect wherein for the love of God they have humbled themselves. “He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.” (St. Luke i. 52.) Thus Mary sang in her *Magnificat*, and does not our own experience bear witness

to the truth of her words? But there is something more to be yet learnt from this point. Observe that Jesus receives His supernatural consecration, grace and the ratification of the sublime office on which He is entering, while He stands in the Jordan in the character of a humble penitent. Wherefore undertake no office, do not thrust yourself into any calling, any post, without having previously imitated Jesus' example, remembering that without the grace of God you can do nothing, and that He only gives His grace to those who are of a humble and contrite spirit.

2d. Consider the reason why the Holy Ghost assumed the shape of a dove when He consecrated and dedicated our Lord to the office of Redeemer. As at the time of the deluge it was a dove which, by returning to Noe with the branch of an olive-tree, apprised the patriarch of the subsidence of the terrific flood, so the sacred dove appeared on this occasion with the mystic olive-branch of peace and reconciliation, to signify that, from that time forth, the waters of the spiritual deluge were decreasing, and the world, inundated by sin and vice, was about to be restored through Christ to its pristine form and condition. Would that the Holy Ghost would also descend upon us with the olive-branch of peace and reconciliation with God! Has He thus descended upon you?

3d. Consider another signification which the dove has for us. From time immemorial the dove has been regarded as the symbol of purity, because it is so careful not to contract the slightest defilement, and never alights upon any place that is not clean. And by hovering over the head of our Lord in the form of a dove, what does the Holy Spirit give us to understand, if not that the Lord Jesus is not only Himself entirely free from every stain of sin, but that through Him the whole of mankind should be cleansed from sin in the waters of baptism? May this be indeed the case with you, my soul; may you who are a temple of the Holy Ghost, be also a dove, fearful lest the least impurity should stain your soul, and never frequenting places where you might be defiled; that is to say, never

listening to sinful conversation or ungodly discourses, holding aloof from undesirable society. Let the resolution to act thus, and the renewal of your baptismal vows, close your meditation to-day.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE THREEFOLD WARNING CONTAINED IN TO-DAY'S GOSPEL.

Represent to yourself, my soul, in vivid colors, the scene described in the Gospel for to-day. The servants of the proprietor of the land have sown good seed, the best of its kind, in his fields, with confident hope of a good crop. They go out in the spring-time to inspect the young wheat that has sprung up in the fields, and who can depict their amazement, their dismay, when they perceive the ground to be a mass of weeds! Listen to their sorrowful exclamation: "Did we not sow good seed, whence then hath it cockle?" (St. Matt. xiii. 27.) In order that you, my soul, may not be compelled to join in this bitter cry, or share the fate of these unfortunate servants, lay to your heart to-day the threefold warning of the Gospel on which you will now proceed to meditate.

1st. While the servants slept, the evil enemy came and sowed cockle in the fields. Here we have the first warning; the Apostle gives us a similar one in other words, few in number, but pregnant with meaning: *fratres vigilate*; watch, brethren, do not sleep, do not grow careless, do not think yourselves secure. Believe me, the evil enemy watches for nothing more keenly than for the moment when men sleep. For months, for years you have struggled against evil, you have striven after what is good; already you anticipate with delight the fruit that may be expected from your efforts, when alas! confident of victory beforehand, you become lukewarm, indifferent, you slumber, and the evil enemy comes and sows cockle. Or you are perhaps a Superior, or one who has the cure of souls.

Woe betide you if you sleep, though it be for ever so short a time! The devil lies in wait for that instant, and if you fail in vigilance in one respect, in regard to one single soul, if out of human respect or for any reason whatsoever you wink at what is wrong—then the evil adversary comes and sows cockle. Wherefore, my soul, *vigila*, watch and be vigilant.

2d. The devil moreover sows the cockle in among the wheat. Here observe for your further warning Satan's malice and craft. He sows the cockle among the good seed. Bad men, tempters of others, know well how they can artfully conceal their cockle among the wheat; they assume an external appearance of being pious and retiring, chaste and devout, but if one frequents their company for any length of time, the cloven foot shows itself. Wherefore, my soul, be very cautious whom you trust. Do not give yourself away unsuspiciously to the first comer, though his influence may seem to be good; do not take for granted that it is fine wheat that he sows in your heart; wait a little; after awhile the seed will spring up, and you will then see whether cockle or wheat makes its appearance. O how many innocent, pious, contented souls have lost their innocence, their piety, their peace of mind, because they have rashly, unsuspiciously allowed themselves to make friends with certain individuals, to hold intercourse with strangers, to be indiscriminate in their reading. And if the Religious life shelters you in a great measure from this danger—though it yet exists even in the cloister—then pray earnestly this and every day for the guileless souls in the world who inadvertently run into the arms of destruction.

3d. “Suffer both to grow until the harvest,” the good-man says to his servants, “lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it.” (v. 30.) These words contain the third warning of the Gospel; it is against premature and exaggerated zeal. It has been well said: Blind zeal only does harm. Do not immediately condemn, do not instantly speak in strong reprobation, do not, as soon as you perceive anything

that is, or appears to be evil, come down upon it in a whirlwind of indignation. How much mischief has been done by intemperate zeal in the pulpit, in the confessional, in convents, in the Church and in the State! It repels the good and does not convert the bad. "All in its right time." See that you keep your eye on the sprouting cockle, lest it spread too rapidly, but do not begin to root up, to condemn, to pass sentence forthwith, for the Church of God, which is the field He has planted, possesses a singular virtue, whereby, as St. Augustine teaches, it often happens that those who at first have the appearance of cockle, are changed and become a choice kind of wheat, children of God. The sunshine of gentle words, the soft breezes of patient charity and compassion, the celestial dew of tears and supplications, the unseen influence of voluntary penance and mortification, does far more to produce the fruit of conversion in the case of a sinner than the downpour of a torrent of rash zeal. Reflect upon this, and for the future act with a like caution towards the cockle in the Church, in your Community, in your convent, and the evil adversary will not be able to do much harm.

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR LORD'S BAPTISM IN REGARD TO OUR FAITH.

To-day you are invited once more to place the whole sublime spectacle of our Lord's baptism before your mental sight. Picture to yourself the tranquilly-flowing river Jordan, on whose banks a figure stands that commands our respect; it is John the Baptist, who has just administered baptism to the Son of God. See how the Holy Spirit descends upon our Lord, at that moment resplendent with celestial glory; listen to the voice of the Eternal Father sounding from on high. How sacred, how grand

a picture is this, and how replete it is with meaning of importance for our Faith!

1st. Consider that at His baptism Christ is proved to be the Son of the living God. To this, the principal article of our Faith, we have no less a witness than God the Father Himself, whose voice is heard from Heaven, saying: "This is My Son" (St. Matt. iii. 17), as if He would declare to the whole world: This man, to all appearance nothing but an ordinary man, capable of suffering and subject to death; this man who out of humility is baptized as if He were a sinner—is My Son, and that not merely in virtue of His baptism, not merely by adoption, but begotten by Me before all ages. What an all-powerful testimony is this! The testimony not of an erring mortal, but of God who cannot err, the God who is Truth eternal. He bears witness that Christ is the Son of God. Does not this strengthen your faith? But there is more yet to come.

2d. Consider that at our Lord's baptism the whole work of redemption, the basis on which our faith rests, received a solemn sanction from God. Observe that He did not merely say: "This is My Son;" He said, "This is My beloved Son;" Him whom I love and have ever loved above all creatures; Him in whom I have had pleasure from all eternity, and for whose sake I shall have pleasure in mankind whom He has redeemed. Now if the Father is well pleased in His Son, He is also well pleased in His work, the work of our redemption to which on this day the Father gives His sanction, and not the Father alone but the Holy Ghost also, who, descending upon the Son, imprints His divine seal upon His work. The vast signification of our Lord's baptism becomes yet more evident if we proceed to consider a third point in this mystery.

3d. At this baptism of our Lord the sublime mystery of the Holy Trinity was openly revealed for the first time since the creation of the world. At the commencement of the work of creation, this truth was revealed, although in a much more obscure manner, since it was the will of

the Father that the world should be made; the Son carried out that will of the Father by the word He spoke: Let it be made; and the Holy Spirit, moving over the waters, completed the work of the Father and the Son. And so at the beginning of the spiritual new-creation of the world, at the outset of the work of its redemption, the most Holy Trinity manifest themselves anew, and more clearly than before. The voice of the Father is distinctly heard, in whose counsels the redemption of man was decreed from all eternity; the Son appears in a visible form in the Jordan, on the eve of commencing, in stern reality, the work of that redemption; and the Holy Spirit, to whom it belongs to carry on that redemption until the end of time, hovers over the waters of the river Jordan, as He once moved over the face of the waters when the earth was but just created. Impress deeply upon your mind, my soul, the vast meaning attaching to the fact of Christ's baptism; it is a strong confirmation of your faith. In conclusion, however, remember that you too have been baptized, that to you also the mystery of the most Holy Trinity was then revealed, that it was given you to believe that mystery, and the same divine voice said of you: "This is My beloved son." Have you retained that character? Is God still well pleased in you? Ask yourself this question, and according to the answer your heart returns, make your resolutions for the future.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON OUR LORD'S DEPARTURE TO THE DESERT AFTER HIS BAPTISM.

The great event of the baptism of Jesus is now over, and you will see, my soul, how He on whom such signal marks of divine favor have been lavished, hastens away from the scene where He has been glorified, and betakes Himself alone to the seclusion of the desert. Follow your

Saviour in spirit as He thus departs to the desert; and meditate upon the reasons which induced Him thus to withdraw into solitude.

1st. Our Lord retires to the desert in order to escape from the praise of men. When the light of Heaven shone around Him as He stood in the Jordan, when the voice of the Eternal Father was heard to glorify His Son, there were many bystanders who witnessed His exaltation, and who undoubtedly regarded with the deepest respect one so singularly favored. Now that public veneration was precisely what our Lord desired to avoid, not because He had any reason to fear any vain thirst for honor in Himself, but for the sake of giving an example to His servants; for the sake of teaching them if at any time they were favored with extraordinary graces, if in any holy place they attracted attention and received marks of esteem from the multitude on account of their devotion, the success of their labors, their sermons, etc., not to stay in that place, not to delight in that aureola as children delight in the glow of a blazing fire, but with all humility to depart at once, and retire into solitude, leaving all the glory to Him to whom alone it is due. How often, my soul, have you failed in this respect, how often have you actually sought after the very thing from which you were bound to fly; fancying in your foolish vanity that every one ought to hear of it and extol you for it, if you have received special graces and your exertions have seemed to be peculiarly blessed!

2d. Observe that Jesus, after the external ceremony of His baptism is over, retired into the desert in order that the interior action of the grace conveyed in the outward rite might have its full effect upon His soul. Here again a useful lesson is to be found for the servants of God, that they should indeed not despise external rites and ceremonies, but esteem them at their true value, and above all guard against a tendency to rest on them too much as the basis of their devotion and the mainstay of their service of God. They ought rather to endeavor, while the external act is being performed, from time to time to fix their at-

tention exclusively on the spiritual act, to awaken interior affections and dispositions; and moreover, previously to any such external act appertaining to divine worship, to spend some time in solitude in preparatory prayer, for the purpose of infusing life and vigor into the ceremony that is to follow, lest they deserve to hear the condemnatory words God addressed of yore to the people of Israel: "This people with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me." (Is. xxix. 13.)

3d. Consider how Jesus, by withdrawing into the desert after His baptism, gives His servants an example of what their behavior should be after the reception of grace. They ought to retire into solitude. At the conclusion of every Mass, every sermon, every Confession, every Communion or any other act of worship, hasten with our Lord to the quiet seclusion of prayer. Shut the door behind you, and remain solitary and alone, holding sweet converse with your God. There think over the graces whereof you have been the recipient, there meditate upon the sermon you have heard or the good advice of your Confessor; there listen in silence to what our Lord, whom you have just received in Holy Communion, says to you; consider what means you must employ, what obstacles you must remove, in order that the graces bestowed on you may bear their full measure of fruit. The brief quarter of an hour spent in quiet intercourse with your God after you have received His grace in public worship or external rites, is of the utmost importance. Here you see the reason why the reception of the sacraments, the holy Mass which you hear or celebrate daily, the forcible exhortations and admonitions which you receive have hitherto been of so little use, produced so little effect, because immediately after them you have gone straight away from them and immersed yourself in the distractions and business of daily life, instead of withdrawing with Jesus into solitude.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE WORDS: "JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO
THE DESERT." (ST. MATT. IV. 1.)

Represent to yourself, my soul, the desert, a barren, desolate, interminable plain. Far and wide there is no tree to cast a shade, no spring to refresh the thirsty traveller, nothing but burning sand, calcined rocks, thorny bushes; and the only sign of life in the dreary death-like expanse is the howling of the wild beasts that inhabit it. It is for this gruesome wilderness that our Lord leaves the fair and fertile plains of Jordan, with its verdant meadows, its sparkling, silvery streams, shady trees and fragrant gardens. What induces Him to do this? Holy Scripture tells us.

1st. It was the Spirit, none other than the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus is not impelled by His own spirit, as wilful mortals often are; He was not driven by the Spirit of evil disguised as an angel of light, as is the case with many Religious who are instigated by pride and a desire of singularity; He was not actuated by ill-temper, a spirit of disappointed ambition, of desperation, as are many individuals on whom the world turns its back; no, Jesus retires into solitude led by the Holy Spirit. That is a point of the utmost importance, and one in which self-deception is extremely easy. How often the real, the secret motives for some step, some action are of a very different nature to the ostensible ones! Wherefore if you purpose to enter an Order, assume a post, embrace a peculiar manner of life, or to adopt exercises of devotion, austerities, practices of virtue which are not those which the Rule prescribes and your fellow Religious are accustomed to observe, scrutinize your motives carefully that you may discern by what spirit you are led. Listen to the words of the great ascetic: "Not every desire is from the Holy Ghost even though it seem to a man right and good. It is hard to judge truly

whether it be a good or an evil spirit which urges thee on to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved by thine own. Many have been deceived in the end who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit." (Init., B. iii., ch. xv.) Hence if you should be interiorly impelled to any act, before you obey that impulse lift up your heart to God in prayer, saying: "Lord, Thou knowest what is for the best; let everything be done that Thou willest, and when and how Thou willest it."

2d. Consider how, according to the testimony of the Evangelist, our Lord went up by the Spirit into the desert immediately after His baptism, without any delay, because He had surrendered His sacred humanity entirely to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Learn from this, my soul, in what wise you ought to obey the inspirations of the divine Spirit: promptly and unhesitatingly. If you have made a careful scrutiny of your motives, as you saw it was necessary for you to do from the first point of this meditation; if after this examination, after consulting with your Confessor and other enlightened advisers, you no longer feel any doubt that the Spirit of God is urging you to do this or that, then obey that impulse as Jesus did, obey in spite of all hindrances and opposition, and obey as Jesus did, promptly. Strike the iron while it is hot. Alas! how many souls have let the right moment go by, how many have neglected to follow the first impulse of the Holy Ghost, and that first impulse has never been repeated! Here again we may quote the words of the great master of the spiritual life: "Sometimes it behooves thee to use violence, and manfully resist the sensitive appetite, not regarding what the flesh likes and what it dislikes; but rather to make it thy care that, even though unwilling, it may become subject to the spirit." (Init., B. iii., ch. xi.)

3d. Consider that it is into the desert that our Lord is led by the Spirit. After He had been solemnly confirmed in His office of Redeemer and consecrated to it by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit does not impel Him to go up to Jerusalem, or out into the world to exercise His sacred

ministry; on the contrary, it leads Him into the desert. There, far from the society of men, solitary and alone with God, He is to prepare Himself for the work of His exalted vocation; to prepare Himself by tranquil prayer, by solitude and seclusion, by a forty days' fast, by vigils, by sleeping on the bare ground under the open sky, and dwelling among wild beasts.

My soul, apart from the fact that you ought, before entering upon any office, before commencing any special active work, to prepare yourself for it in the company of Jesus, in retirement and mortification, there is yet another lesson to be learnt from our Lord's example. It may be that you suddenly feel yourself animated by grand, by lofty desires. You long to devote yourself exclusively to the service of God, to do great things for mankind, to go as a missionary to savage tribes, to offer yourself, as so many saints have offered themselves, to suffer as a victim of expiation for the sins of the human race. Unrest seizes upon you; the quiet monotony of the cloister, of your daily life seems too narrow for your aspirations, you become discontented. Learn of Jesus, O Christian! Learn of Him to remain tranquil and secluded in the retirement, the obscurity of your position. In this desert, whither the Spirit led you, occupy yourself with prayer, with meditation; fast with Jesus, practise mortification with Him, that will be the best of all preparations for the wider sphere of activity after which you yearn. If your desire is inspired by God, it will certainly be accomplished; meanwhile I again advise you to follow the precious counsel the author of the *Imitation* gives you in these words: "No man safely goes abroad but he who willingly remains hidden at home; no man speaks safely but he who willingly holds his peace; no man rules safely but he who is willingly ruled; no man safely rejoices unless he have within him the testimony of a good conscience. It is better for a man to live in obscurity and take care of himself, than, neglecting himself, to work miracles." (B. i., ch. xxii.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE FORTY DAYS' FAST OF OUR LORD.

To-day you are called to go out into the desert and in solemn stillness contemplate your Lord, as in this sacred seclusion, solitary and alone, He holds intercourse with His heavenly Father in prayer. There He remains for forty days, forty days of the most rigorous fasting. One day after another passes, yet Jesus takes no food; weeks go by, but no morsel passes the Saviour's lips until forty days were ended; then He was hungry. O marvellous fast, full of instruction for us!

1st. Jesus fasts as an act of atonement for man's unlawful excesses. Alas! it was the inordinate gratification of sensual appetite that brought on the human race all the untold misery from which Jesus came to redeem us. The sins we commit are every one of them acts of unlawful indulgence, and therefore He fitly begins His work of redemption with what is diametrically opposed to sensual indulgence, with fasting, in order by His abstinence to atone for the sins of mankind which arise from the inordinate desire for enjoyment. So you too, O Christian, ought to fast as an atonement, an atonement for your craving for enjoyment, which displays itself in a threefold manner, as covetousness, ambition, sensuality. And in fasting you ought not only to have the intention of expiating your own sins, but—and this Religious and Priests should ever bear in mind, for it is what gives dignity to their vocation—also of expiating the sins of your fellow men, who cannot or will not fast themselves. Think to yourself, to-day I will fast, not for myself, but like Jesus, for this or that sinner, for this or that unhappy soul suffering on account of her inordinate desire for sensual gratification, and this thought will render fasting easier to yourself and more acceptable to God.

2d. Consider that Jesus fasts as a preparation for His

career. As all the great saints fasted previously to taking in hand the work God commissioned them to accomplish, as we see Moses fasted, Elias fasted, St. John the Baptist fasted in view of preparing themselves for their work, so our Lord also fasted. His task was to defeat the devil and overthrow his kingdom. Satan founded that kingdom first of all on indulgence in unlawful gratifications, now the great Conqueror comes and founds His kingdom on that which is most opposed to such indulgence, on fasting and abstinence. Mark this, my soul, fasting has not only the nature of an atonement, it is also an excellent means of advancing in virtue, and a very powerful weapon wherewith to resist the devil. And as the devil retains his power over men so long as they cannot subdue in themselves the craving for inordinate gratification of the senses, so on the other hand those who by fasting conquer their fleshly lusts, prove too strong for him to overcome. If therefore you desire effectually to combat the evil within and around you, commence the warfare as Jesus did, by fasting. If you have any special work to perform for God's glory, if you are about to undertake a post of responsibility, arm yourself beforehand against Satan's darts and his assaults, as Jesus did, by fasting, and divide the period of fasting so that for one week it may be as an act of expiation that you fast, for another, as a means of acquiring certain virtues, or resisting certain temptations.

3d. Finally, consider that Jesus fasted without intermission. During the whole time of His sojourn in the desert His fast was unbroken. Herein is a lesson of great importance for you, my soul. As you ought to pray without ceasing, so you ought likewise to fast without ceasing. A Religious ought never to allow a day to pass without some act of self-denial, be it ever so slight. You will of course fast more rigorously in the prescribed season, fast, that is, in the strict sense of the word, but do not drop the practice at other times. If in Lent you fast chiefly in view of the mortification of the flesh, at other times let it be for the mortification of the spirit. By

embracing the Religious life or entering the Priesthood, you place yourself in the foremost ranks of the army of Jesus Christ, waging war with the devil and his kingdom; you belong to the chosen warriors of the Lord; wherefore see that you never lay aside that important weapon against the malign foe, the practice of fasting. Make a resolution to this effect to-day, and consider one point more:

Although the Saviour fasted so rigorously, He did not feel it until the forty days were ended. Till then it was easy and pleasant to Him because of the strength imparted by His divine nature and the ineffable delight of the contemplation of heavenly things. If you are in the grace of God, if during the season of fasting you contemplate heavenly things in your mental prayer, then fasting will no longer seem difficult and onerous, you will find in it a celestial sweetness, in comparison with which all the enjoyments of the world will be as vinegar is to honey. Therefore before you close this meditation make a resolution cheerfully and gladly to keep up the practice of fasting, in one way or another, both now and throughout the whole year.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE DUTY OF MEDITATING FREQUENTLY UPON OUR LORD'S PASSION.

To-day, my soul, on beginning your meditation, picture to yourself the Seraphic Father St. Francis with the stigmata of our blessed Lord's Passion; imagine that you see him standing amid his spiritual sons, his heart glowing with charity, constantly repeating to them this one admonition: "I pray you, my Brothers, always keep before your eyes the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ;" this Passion was the daily, nay, the hourly meditation of the saint himself, the source whence he derived the fervor of his devotion, the ardor of his charity, the sanctity of

his life. Now in order that you may the better obey this earnest injunction, consider for your meditation the gross ingratitude of those who do not think upon the sufferings of our Lord.

1st. Consider that the Passion of Christ delivered us from the power of the devil. Represent to yourself in vivid colors that terrible and mighty potentate, picture to yourself the horrors of hell, imagine that you hear the crackling of the torturing flames, that you see the gnawing worm that never dies, imagine yourself for one moment surrounded by the awful darkness which envelops the damned; and when you are fully impressed with these appalling torments, dwell upon this one thought: I was doomed to this terrible fate for all eternity; there was only one means whereby I could be, whereby I was, rescued from it, and that was the Passion of our Lord. Now would it not be the blackest ingratitude if you were never to think of His Passion? If a monarch grants a free pardon to a criminal who is condemned to a painful death, and during the remainder of his life that criminal never thinks again of the benefactor to whose grace and mercy he owes the prolongation of his days, does it not evince the greatest ingratitude on his part? Perhaps, my soul, you are this thankless culprit whom you so strongly censure; or are you in the habit of frequently meditating upon our Lord's Passion?

2d. Consider that by Christ's Passion we were made the children of God. Having through sin become the children of the devil, inheritors of hell, companions of the fallen angels, a sorrowful destiny stared us in the face, a destiny from which alas! none could rescue us but the One whom we had outraged and offended. And He came to deliver us, to deliver us by means of His bitter Passion. By this Passion we are made sons of God instead of children of the devil; from being culprits doomed to hell we become heirs of Heaven; from being subjects of Satan we are transformed into associates of the angels. O grasp this truth fully, my soul, in order that the thanklessness of those who seldom, if ever, medi-

tate on our Lord's Passion may be made clearly apparent to you! What would you say of a man whom a king had, out of pure charity, raised from the dust, adopted as his son, constituted heir to his kingdom, and who, after receiving these favors, never gave a thought to his generous benefactor? You would declare him to be a miserable ingrate. Take care that you are not pronouncing your own condemnation.

3d. Consider how intensely our Lord suffered during His Passion. Picture to yourself the Saviour at the time when He presented such a pitiful appearance that even Pilate felt compassion for Him, and could not refrain from exclaiming: "Ecce homo!" Behold the Man! Hear how this Victim of charity, streaming with blood, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross, calls to you in the extremity of His woe: "All ye who go by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." (Lam. i. 12.) Then consider that if Tobias exhorted his son ever to be mindful of the mother who had borne so much pain and sorrow for his sake, how much more right has the Church to enjoin upon us to think upon the sufferings of our Lord. It is related of St. Vincent of Paul that he caused a galley-slave to be set at liberty, by taking his place and submitting to have the chain riveted on him and bearing the terrible punishment as his substitute. Can it be supposed that a single day passed without the released prisoner remembering with gratitude that act of charity? And you, O ingrate, for whose deliverance your God has endured, not the weight of fetters, but the death of the cross, do you think so seldom of His Passion? No, my soul, from henceforward let no Friday pass without meditating on our Saviour's sufferings; from henceforward never hear Mass, never recite the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary, never let your eyes rest on a cross, never even pass two cross-roads, without remembering, with gratitude and compunction of heart, and briefly meditating upon our Lord's sacred Passion.

**SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.****ON THE FIRST TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.**

For forty days Jesus sojourned in the desert in undisturbed solitude, but now a second personage appears upon the scene. It is Satan. My soul, behold in imagination the tempter when, disguised as an angel of light, but concealing under this bright exterior an untold depth of malice and guile, he approaches the Saviour, and artfully taking advantage of His famished condition, whispers in His ear the tempting suggestion: “Command that these stones be made bread.” (St. Matt. iv. 2.) And now proceed to consider:

1st. The natural and apparently charitable character of this advice. Jesus is hungry. Now what could be more simple than that He should make use of His miraculous power to appease His hunger, since in the desert there is no other means of procuring food for Himself? There seems indeed no harm in the suggestion, and why should one suppose that it is not kindly meant? And yet what would have been the result, my soul, if our Lord had followed the counsel that seemed so natural, so unimpeachable? He would have obeyed the dictum of the devil and manifested an unpardonable want of confidence in His heavenly Father, who feeds the sparrow on the roof, and will not suffer the ravens of the air to perish from hunger. Furthermore He would have misused the miraculous power, given to Him for a divine purpose, by exercising it for the satisfaction of a need of His lower nature; observe what a serious misdeed the devil thus tried to induce the Saviour to commit by this apparently harmless suggestion: “Command that these stones be made bread,” and learn this useful lesson for yourself: never on any account to listen to the tempter. How cunningly he begins by prompting you at first to commit some trifling act, to all appearances a very innocent transgression, such

as eating some dainty, allowing your eyes to wander through curiosity, speaking a few words in the time of silence, etc. What great harm can there be in that? you ask yourself. But Satan, if once he gets hold of a finger, soon grasps the whole hand. The gratification of your palate, which you thought so harmless, will soon lead to excess at table; the "innocent" look will perhaps kindle unruly, impure passions which will consume your heart for months; and the breach of the rule of silence will open the way for conversation calculated to destroy your brother's good name, and perhaps occasion hatred and strife that may last for years. Wherefore, my soul, do not trust the tempter; turn a deaf ear to him, even if he urges you to seek a martyr's death.

2d. Consider how craftily the time of the temptation is chosen. Satan does not come at an earlier period, before Jesus has begun to feel hungry and weak; he waits until the time when he imagines that the Lord, exhausted by His long abstinence from food, will not have the same force to resist him. It is not without mystic meaning that Satan is described in the Apocalypse as sitting on a black horse holding a pair of scales in his hand. (Ap. vi. 5.) The black horse signifies that he endeavors with his temptations to darken men's minds, so that they may not perceive the evil of that which he—the Prince of darkness—tempts them to commit, and in order that he may succeed the better, he carefully studies and weighs the time, the place, the ways and means which will be most opportune for the temptation. With this view he pays great attention to each man's natural inclinations and spiritual condition. See how wisely he selected Judas, the one amongst the apostles who was given to avarice, as the one who should betray our Lord. How artfully he took advantage of the time when David was living in idleness to seduce him to commit adultery. How craftily he availed himself of the moment when Eve's eyes rested with pleasure on the apple, to persuade her to disobey God's command. Wherefore, my soul, be constantly on your guard against this wily foe; never think yourself safe;

above all never allow passions to gain ground in your soul; never frequent undesirable society; never proudly defy dangers, behind which Satan lies in wait like a roaring lion, seeking how he may devour your unwary soul.

3d. Consider how temptation is to be overcome. Jesus does not parley with the tempter; He simply withstands him by quoting the will of God, saying: "It is written, not in bread alone doth man live." (St. Matt. iv. 4.) Learn hence, O my soul, the plainest, easiest way of repelling Satan's assaults: Only place God's commands in opposition to his suggestions, without discussion or long deliberation. If he tempts you to disobedience, say: It is written, God only shalt thou serve; if he tempts you to envy, say: It is written, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods; if he tempts you to untruthfulness, say: It is written, thou shalt not bear false witness, etc. Do this, and Satan will drop his weapons of attack on hearing these words resolutely pronounced, as speedily as he did so when our Lord thus answered him in the first temptation wherewith he assailed Him.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

To-day, my soul, betake yourself in spirit to the smiling banks of the lake of Genesareth, and there behold your Saviour sitting in a little boat, rocked by the blue waves that ruffle the surface of the lake, teaching the people, who have assembled in crowds upon the shore; just as if the azure sky above them was the roof of some vast cathedral, the sun the sanctuary lamp ever burning before the Blessed Sacrament, and Peter's little bark the pulpit, whence Jesus delivers His grand discourse. Imagine that you actually see that divine Preacher, that you hear from His lips the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, which we read in to-day's Gospel, and which St. Augustine asserts to be a figure of our Lord Himself. Then consider the following points:

1st. The growth of this divine grain of mustard-seed. Jesus, as St. Chrysologus says, the divine grain of mustard-seed, was sown in the tender soil of Mary's virginal womb by the miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost. Oh how minute a grain did He become, the infinite, immeasurable God, when He enclosed Himself in the narrow compass of a human body, the form of an infant! But when once through the Nativity at Bethlehem this seed sprang up out of that sacred soil, how rapidly it grew and developed into a mighty tree, the tree of the holy cross, a tree living and flourishing for all time; in the holy sacrifice of the Mass spreading its branches far and wide in all lands throughout the whole earth, fraught with blessings for mankind. Look and be amazed; praise and magnify this glorious tree; give thanks to God for the fruit it bears, and that you may do so in a more heartfelt manner consider the following point:

2d. The nature of the fruit of the tree to which the mustard-seed grew. The peculiar properties of mustard-seed are that when ground and eaten as a condiment, it warms the stomach, promotes digestion, strengthens the frame and makes the eyes water. Now the fruit which Christ, the heavenly mustard-tree, produces, that is, His divine grace, possesses these corresponding qualities in the supernatural order; it gives fervor to the cold heart of man, it destroys the sins which the soul in its sore delusion has drunk down like water, it draws tears of compunction from the eyes, it reanimates and invigorates the soul. Wherefore draw near frequently to the heavenly mustard-tree, pluck its fruits, pulverize them in holy meditation, and consume them in the holy sacrifice of the Mass or by devout reception of the Sacraments.

3d. Consider in conclusion the shade which this mighty tree casts. We read in to-day's Gospel: "The birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof" (St. Matt. xiii. 32), and doubtless the beasts of the field also found welcome shade beneath its spreading branches. So Jesus, the divine mustard-tree, stands amongst us, extending far and wide the branches of His grace, and not

alone do the birds come—the just, that is, who are already winging their way to heaven, who are already soaring above the earth; the four-footed beasts also, unhappy sinners, find in the shadow of our Lord's mercy and compassion a refuge from the heat of temptation, salvation from the fires of hell that threaten to consume them. Come this very day, my soul, come nigh to this tree of grace, rest in its branches, build your nest there, for nowhere can you find true repose but in the Sacred Heart of the Redeemer. Do not rise up from this meditation without having made a special resolution not to let a single day pass without sowing in the heart of one of your brethren or depositing in the general treasury of the Church the mustard-seed of a word of warning kindly spoken, a prayer, a work of penance, in grateful remembrance of the divine grain of mustard-seed. For one such seed, fertilized by the dew of heaven, the grace of God, a word spoken in season, a prayer, an act of mortification, may grow and become a tree that, when centuries have passed, will yet be a blessing to the Church by the fruit it bears and the shade it casts. What does not the Church owe to St. Augustine; and what made him a saint? These words uttered by a child: *tolle et lege*, take this and read it.

MONDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE SECOND TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

Behold Jesus standing with the tempter on a pinnacle of the temple. At His feet lies outspread the holy city of David; the gilded turrets of the temple glitter in the sun's bright rays; its marble walls fascinate the eye with their dazzling whiteness. The view from that eminence is indeed a fair one; and now the voice of the tempter is heard to say: "Cast Thyself down." (St. Matt. iv. 6.) Keep this scene before your mind's eye while you proceed to meditate upon it.

1st. Consider what this temptation signifies. The holy angels are, it is true, always at hand, ready to protect all men who are in danger, and above all the God-man, Christ Jesus. But Satan wants the Redeemer to do more than thus trust in their aid. He seeks to induce Him, contrary to the divine ordinance and the divine will, to invoke the protection of the angels (which is promised only to trustful faith that implores help under pressure of need and affliction) for an act prompted by presumption and the desire to gratify a thirst for notoriety. He would have Jesus, to the astonished admiration of a gaping crowd, from no higher motives than these, cast Himself down from the giddy height whereon He stands, and for this adventurous, foolhardy act He is to claim the divine protection. Jesus, who came into the world to raise His sacred humanity from the lowest abasement to the highest exaltation, to rise gradually from the depths of His hidden life, His Passion and death, to the height of His glorious resurrection and ascension, Jesus, I say, is now urged to reverse the order of things as ordained by God, and precipitate Himself from a lofty height to the depth below. Would not such a fall strongly resemble Satan's fall from the summit of Heaven to the abyss of hell?

Now observe, my soul, in what fair, nay, what holy words the devil clothes this temptation to sin, and learn thence the oft-repeated lesson: to regard with unconditional mistrust all suggestions to perform extraordinary acts, such as casting oneself down from the temple, adopting excessive austerities, practices of devotion prohibited by the Rule, etc. Such suggestions proceed more often from an evil than from a good angel.

2d. Consider the shameless effrontery of the tempter. Although he was defeated and put to shame in the first temptation, he yet engages in battle a second time, suggesting to the Saviour an act yet more adventurous and extravagant than the first time; nay, he actually presumes to assume the character of an exponent of the divine Word, of a commentator of Holy Scripture. He, the devil, poses in this fashion! O learn from this, my soul, how

shameless Satan is! Had you defeated him a hundred times over, he would return quite unabashed, to attack you again and again until at last he should win the victory; and to accomplish this no means are too dastardly for him to employ, no ways too miry for his feet to walk in. Wherefore be vigilant and do not deem yourself secure if you experience no temptations for some length of time, for Satan is on the alert day and night, watching until he can cast you from the pinnacle of the temple, from the height of your virtue into the abyss of sin; and it is when you least expect it that he achieves your ruin.

3d. Consider the place of the temptation. It is the temple, the house of God, the holy place of Sion; it is on a spot specially dedicated to God, that the shameless tempter assails our Lord with so grievous a temptation. This shows us that there is no place upon earth, however sacred, where we can be free from temptation. True, it is often precisely in the house of God, while we are engaged in prayer or meditation, at the time when we do our utmost to fix our attention on spiritual things, that we experience the most violent assaults and temptations of the devil. But do not by any means be disheartened; simply refuse to listen to him; repulse him as our Lord did in a few forcible words, and his efforts will be unavailing, for he can only counsel you, he cannot compel you to sin. There is something more yet to be learnt from this meditation: Neither the loneliness of the desert, nor the sanctity of the temple was sufficient to protect Jesus from temptation. There is in fact no place where we are safe from the devil. Say not to yourself: If I were in that place, in that position, if I were under this Superior or if I lived in that convent, I should not be subject to this temptation. It is possible that you might be free from that particular temptation, but you would have another. For as the great ascetic says: "There is not any order so holy, nor place so secret, where there are not temptations and adversities. Many seek to fly temptations, and fall into them more grievously. By flight alone (change of place, of calling, etc.), we cannot overcome; but by

patience and true humility we are made stronger than our enemies." (Imit. B. i. ch. 13.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE THIRD TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD.

Jesus is now standing upon a mountain, and what a beautiful panorama is unfolded to His view! Before Him lie outspread glorious forests rustling in the breeze, and below them green valleys with their springs and rivulets gleaming in the sunshine like streams of molten silver. The splendor of great cities, the beauty of tranquil villages, the sea in its grandeur and unfathomable depths, all these are displayed to view, whilst above Him is the blue vault of heaven flecked with silvery clouds, with its flaming sun and countless orbs—and these, "all these," Satan enticingly declares, "I will give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." (St. Matt. iv. 9.)

1st. Consider the promise Satan makes. He promises the possession of the whole world to our Lord. O wily tempter! He has a presentiment that his uncontested sway over the earth is at an end, and he will be superseded by the Son of man. Hence he tempts Him, with the object of making Him accept this sovereignty from him, the devil, instead of from His heavenly Father. He desires to give Him the dominion of the world, without His purchasing it as the Eternal Father wills that He shall purchase it, by His cross and Passion, by hunger and nakedness, by the shedding of His precious blood; he offers to bestow it on the Saviour at a much cheaper price; it shall be His if He will merely do homage to him, to Satan, as the supreme owner of the world.

Observe, my soul, the artful character of this temptation, aimed directly against God the Father and His eternal counsels. Consider this also: Satan was ready to yield up the sovereign authority over the world, which he had

acquired at the cost of so much exertion, to surrender it immediately—at least so he said—if he could only succeed in causing Jesus to fall. Now you see, O my soul, how highly Satan values you. To possess you is more to him than the possession of the whole world. How truly the devil himself unintentionally confirms the truth of our Lord's words when He warns us rather to suffer the loss of the whole world than the loss of our soul! And you, my soul, will perhaps sell yourself to the devil not for the possession of the whole world, but of only a minute portion of it, for a drop from its chalice of enjoyment, for a small share of its treasures! What mad folly!

2d. Consider the untruthfulness of the tempter. He makes promises which he cannot keep and has no intention of keeping. He promises to give away the world, which has not belonged to him since our Lord's birth, and which he would never give up unless under compulsion. He who is a liar from the beginning always acts thus. He promises honors, the favor of the great, to his followers, and instead of that they meet with contempt and disgrace. He promises them riches and leaves them in abject poverty. He dazzles them with the prospect of a life of luxury and pleasure, and almost before they have tasted its sweets, he dashes the cup from their lips and consigns them to eternal torments and damnation. And yet poor deluded mortals believe this liar more readily than the Eternal Truth. The proverb says, A liar is not believed even when he speaks the truth. Is it not then unaccountable perversity on your part, my soul, to continue to believe the devil, who has deceived you by his lies a hundred times, who in fact never speaks the truth, rather than your Guardian Angel, who has never deceived you?

3d. Consider how Jesus repels the temptation with the simple words: "Begone, Satan." (St. Matt. iv. 18.) Even if the form of the tempter should be as radiant as the sun, his words sound as sweetly as the psalms of David, this one word, disclosing at once his name and what he is, Satan, the devil, is enough to make his temptations abhor-

rent to us in the extreme. Just reflect, my soul, upon all that the word devil comprises in itself; think of the vices, the scandals, the crimes, the vile deeds on earth whereof he is the author; represent to yourself all the misery, the appalling destitution, the revolting maladies, the corruption which awaits the body after death, all the manifold hideous moral and physical evils which have come upon the earth through the agency of the devil, and you will experience nothing but disgust and abhorrence in regard to this dark spirit and all his works. Once upon a time four theologians were discussing the best method of overcoming temptation. One said: "By the thought of death." A second: "By representing to oneself the day of judgment." A third suggested: "Meditation on the pains of hell." And the fourth declared: "The means you propose are all excellent, but to me it appears that the most powerful weapon whereby to resist temptation is to think what an abominable, vile, malicious and contemptible creature the devil is who seeks to lead one astray and induce one to forsake, in order to please him, the God who is supremely beautiful and all-bountiful." Avail yourself of this thought, my soul, and in future you will have less difficulty in overcoming temptation.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE VOCATION OF THE APOSTLES.

We have seen our Lord defeat Satan in the most triumphant manner, and now we behold Him, after that brilliant victory, issuing forth from His retreat in the desert, to commence the great work for which He has long been preparing Himself. Standing on the pleasant shores of the sea of Genesareth, He perceives on the waters of the lake some poor, simple fishermen in their boats; His omniscient eye discerns that they are fit for the kingdom of God; He addresses to them this command: "*Sequere me,*"

follow Me—and since they instantly obey the call, their vocation is an accomplished fact. Endeavor to realize the wondrous, the striking manner in which our Lord elects His disciples, and then consider these three points:

1st. Who is it who calls? It is Jesus. The disciples do not offer themselves to Him; they do not press Him to receive them; still less are they actuated by human motives or the prospect of worldly advantage in following Him. It is our Lord who Himself calls them. Their vocation comes from God. Their merit consists—and it is no slight merit—in the prompt obedience wherewith they follow the call; for only see, they leave everything, their boats, their nets, their trade, their house, and family to follow a man whom they never saw before, one who was Himself so destitute that He had not where to lay His head. Ponder deeply, my soul, upon this great mystery of the vocation of the apostles; compare their call to some extent with your own, and examine yourself, whether you, too, were ready as they were for the love of God to abandon all that belonged to time and sense—trustfully casting all your care on God's providence—nay, even sacrificing to God all the tenderest affections of your nature?

2d. Consider whom Jesus calls. Poor, lowly folk, fishers and publicans. And to what does He call them? He calls them to the apostolate, to be helpers in His great work, to be instrumental in the conversion and spiritual conquest of the world. Oh how different in every respect is this choice from the choice men make, the world makes! They would in our Lord's place have turned to the great ones of the earth, men in high position, the wise and learned, the opulent and honored; whereas our Lord on the contrary chooses the little ones of the earth to accomplish great things. He calls the poor that by their means He may make the world rich. He chooses the unlettered to instruct mankind and the weak to conquer the great, wide world. Contemplate this election our Lord made with wonder and admiration, and learn from it to be very humble. Despise no man; foolish, despised though he be,

God may make of him a first-rate instrument to carry out His designs, while He will perhaps pass by you, apparently a wiser and better man, as useless for His work.

3d. Consider why Jesus calls fishermen and publicans. In order to strengthen our faith. For in fact is it not a miracle greater far than the raising of Lazarus or the stilling of the storm on the lake, that the world should be converted by men who are despised because they are poor, derided as being fools, detested universally for being Jews? Represent to yourself the world, sunk in idolatry and unbelief, given over to the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, and see how men, destitute of learning or eloquence, men of an alien race, preach to that world a religion of suffering and mortification, and thereby renew the face of the earth. Behold this, I say, and assuredly at the close of this meditation you will repeat the Creed with a firmer faith and more joyous heart.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON THE MARRIAGE-FEAST AT CANA.

Picture to yourself, my soul, as forcibly as you can, the happiness of the bridal pair at Cana, in having such illustrious guests present at their marriage-feast as the only-begotten Son of God, His Virgin Mother, and the glorious apostles. And even if the givers of the feast were not at the time fully aware of the immense honors conferred upon them, they must have become conscious of it later on, to their great delight, when they witnessed the miracle the Lord wrought for their benefit; and every fresh wonder He performed in the course of His ministry, proving Himself to be very God, must have served to heighten their joy, for they could think within themselves: The incarnate God was present at our nuptials! Enter into the joy of the bride and bridegroom, my soul, and when

the desire awakens within you to share in their rejoicing, meditate on the subject as follows:

1st. What does the presence of Christ at this banquet teach us? It teaches us it is not forbidden to the Christian to take part in earthly festivities and pleasures; on the contrary it is often an obligation laid upon him by the law of Christian charity, by the command of obedience. When the time comes round, certain hours in the day, certain seasons in the year, in which according to the rule of your house, of your Order, of your calling, the relaxation of pleasant conversation is permitted, and the members of the Community indulge in lawful amusements, do not make yourself peculiar; do not haughtily hold yourself aloof, as if you were more mortified, more abstemious than your Brethren and Sisters. Imitate the example of Jesus; make an act of renunciation, and say to yourself: If our Lord is present at our recreation, if at these festive times we rejoice only in Him and with Him, such earthly joy will prove no hindrance to us; it will rather be a means, as the marriage-feast at Cana was, of enjoying the spiritual felicity which the presence of our Lord imparts, a felicity which the bridal pair in question experienced.

2d. Consider what is to be learnt from the presence of Mary at this nuptial feast. She went to the marriage, although she was more than indifferent to the pleasures of earth, at the invitation of the bride and bridegroom, who probably cherished the hope that if His Virgin-Mother came, and by her presence gave a character of greater dignity and decorum to the feast, there would be more likelihood that her well-beloved Son would also accept their invitation. Hence, as St. Thomas of Aquin tells us, we may learn the best method of inducing Jesus to visit the dwelling-place of our heart and celebrate our espousals, our mystic union with Him. Only call upon the great Mother of God by your heartfelt devotion to come to you beforehand, entreat her to add her powerful word in support of your invitation, and before long you will share in the joy of the fortunate bridal pair of Cana.

3d. Consider what induced the apostles to go to the

marriage-feast. They went in a spirit of obedience; they followed their Master whithersoever He went, whether it was to a nuptial banquet at Cana, or to a funeral procession at Naim. If therefore Jesus took part in this feast out of charity, the apostles out of obedience, and Mary, the immaculate Virgin, represented purity, learn from this, O Christian, with what virtues your heart ought to be adorned if Jesus is to come to it as to a spiritual banqueting-hall. As in the apartment at Cana where the nuptial feast was held, we see united together the purity of our Lady, the obedience of the apostles, the charity of our Lord, so let your heart be beautified by the white lily of chastity, chastity of soul and body, to which you have pledged yourself by a solemn vow; see that you are adorned by the modest, humble violet of obedience, the obedience you have promised to observe; and let your chief ornament be the rose of fervent charity, charity towards God and your neighbor, which blossoms in higher perfection the more it is protected by the encircling thorns of holy poverty, planted in a heart thoroughly detached from the things of earth. Thus adorned, you may be assured that Jesus will grace with His presence the banqueting-hall you have prepared for the marriage-feast, for your mystic nuptials with Him.

Yet, my soul, why should meditation on so pleasing a subject leave you sorrowful, why are you depressed and sad at heart? Is the remembrance of that day painful to you, when in gladness of soul you were affianced to your Lord, when those three fair flowers were fresh and fragrant? But now, alas! those blossoms are perhaps dry and withered. Should it be so, O then water them to-day with tears of compunction, and they will bloom again with tints as bright and beauteous as ever.

**FRIDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER
THE EPIPHANY.****ON THE MYSTIC MEANING OF OUR LORD'S FIRST MIRACLE.**

To-day, my soul, you are invited to be present in spirit at the marriage in Cana; and first of all represent to yourself the embarrassment of the waiters and of the bridegroom, on perceiving that the supply of wine had run short, and then imagine their joy when they saw the six stone water-pots full of excellent wine. With what veneration, what astonishment, what thankfulness must they have regarded the guest who was endowed with this miraculous power! You, my soul, must not rest satisfied with gazing in wonder at the miracle, but proceed to meditate upon its mystic signification.

1st. Consider what the six water-pots are intended to signify. In accordance with the Jewish custom they were to serve for the purification of the guests, the cleansing prescribed by the law. And since you, my soul, ought to cleanse yourself from every stain of sin before celebrating, in Holy Communion, your spiritual nuptials with Christ, your heavenly Spouse, you should for this purpose make use of six stone water-pots filled with water, which, St. Antony of Padua teaches us are: Contrition, Confession, Prayer, Fasting, Almsdeeds, and sincere forgiveness of injuries and offences. These six things are the means not merely of cleansing us from sin, they are also the means whereby our Lord is pleased to change the muddy water of sin in our soul into the sweet, clear wine of His grace. Wherefore ask yourself seriously, my soul, when and how you will in future make use of these six water-pots.

2d. Consider what is signified by the water which was changed into wine. St. Bernard gives us the answer to this; he asserts that the water symbolizes the fear of God, the wine the love of God. The fear of God, the cold tasteless water, is to be converted within us into the vivifying wine of divine love. It is true that water quenches the

thirst but wine does more: it invigorates and exhilarates. If you only have the fear of God as the motive of your actions, if you serve Him out of fear alone, the fear of His judgments, the fear of hell-fire, you will not lose your soul, your thirst for eternal salvation will not be quenched, but you stand as yet on a very low degree of sanctity; your piety is nothing but cold water, not the choice, full-bodied, warmth-giving wine of charity. Pray God to give you this; entreat Him of His mercy to change your heart in this respect as of yore He changed the water in the stone pots at Cana.

3d. Consider what was the conduct of the disciples after this miracle took place. The Evangelist briefly describes it in these words: "His disciples believed in Him." (St. John ii. 11.) Observe that this miracle sufficed to awaken their faith, and from the time of that first miracle they never forsook their Master; they followed Him faithfully and remained with Him until the end of His public ministry. Whereas you, my soul, who have already seen so many miracles, who have the whole course of His wondrous life on earth and the yet more wondrous work of redemption always before your sight, you who not once, but a hundred, nay a thousand times have been the recipient of His grace, have tasted the generous wine of His compassionate charity, you are yet so weak in Faith, you follow your Lord so grudgingly, and instead of staying with Him faithfully to the last, you not infrequently forsake Him. Bewail your past conduct, unite yourself more closely to Him, renew your vow to-day to be His true disciple, and make a special resolution, in thankful remembrance of our Lord's first miracle, this very day, if possible, to produce out of charity a change in the condition of one of your fellow Christians: by your consolations to change his grief into joy, by your almsdeeds to change his destitution into sufficiency, by your instructions to change his ignorance into knowledge, and by your prayers to change the state of sin in which he is into a state of grace, in as far, that is, as you can effect this with the assistance of divine grace.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

ON SPIRITUAL FASTING.

Recall to mind, my soul, once more the manifold graces, the good thoughts, the increase of devotion, and occasionally the singular joy which you have experienced in seasons of fasting. Now as no man can serve two masters, it seems almost impossible that both body and soul can have pleasure at one and the same time. When all goes well with the body, the soul mourns; and vice versa. And yet it may easily happen that the body may be gratified without injury to the soul; the only thing needful is that the soul should fast if the body is not mortified, if the body does not fast. It is this spiritual abstinence which gives corporal abstinence its value, as we shall proceed to see.

1st. St. Augustine says that spiritual fasting, i.e., abstinence from sin, is true fasting, and pleasing to God even if unaccompanied by corporal abstinence. Of a truth, apart from spiritual abstinence, corporal fasting, much as it was valued and practised by the Lord and all the saints, is of no worth at all. Pope Leo says: It is useless to withhold food from the body if the soul does not at the same time abstain from sin. St. Isidore goes further, for he asserts that those who fast with the body and not with the soul are like the devil, who can do without eating, but cannot refrain from evil deeds. What does your conscience say to you on this point, my soul? Alas, I fear that you do not fast either corporally or spiritually.

2d. Consider that corporal fasting is only a means to an end. The end is to atone for sin. Now hear what St. Augustine says on this subject: "Of what avail is it to have the body void of food and at the same time to let the soul be filled with sins? Of what avail is it for your countenance to become pale with fasting, while your heart burns with envy and hatred towards your neighbors? Of what avail is it to drink no wine and yet steep yourself in the venom of anger? Of what avail is it to eat no ani-

mal food, but allow yourself to gnaw like a rat at the good name, the reputation of your neighbor?" You propose to yourself to make satisfaction for your misdeeds by corporal fasting, while by your spiritual intemperance you add sin to sin. You propose to heal the wounds of your conscience by corporal fasting, whereas by your spiritual incontinency you do but open fresh sores. O useless mortification, unprofitable austerities! Of what use are the means to him who does not wish for the end? Enter, my soul, upon a fresh course of conduct from this day forth.

3d. Consider how corporal fasting is said by the Fathers to be a medicine, a remedy for all the wounds and hurts of the soul. Now sin alone is capable of wounding and injuring the soul; it is a poisoned dart that brings death and destruction to the soul. And no more than a wounded man has any chance of recovery, even though he makes use of the best medicaments, balsam possessed of the most healing properties, as long as the arrow that caused the injury is left in the wound—no more can the soul, struck by the poisoned arrow of sin, be cured by bodily fasting, be it ever so strict and severe, unless the poison of sin that renders all remedies useless is expelled from the soul by spiritual abstinence. Wherefore make a firm resolution to-day to practise both spiritual and corporal abstinence; and reflect particularly in what respect this is most necessary, bearing this truth always in mind: One alone is of little avail, but with both united all the powers of hell may be defied.

FROM SEPTUAGESIMA TO PENTECOST. *THE PASSION, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.*

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the householder depicted in to-day's Gospel; see how he goes out at different

hours of the day, looking about him on the marketplace and in the streets of the city, and wherever he finds a man standing idle, sending him into his vineyard to work there for the wages agreed upon. And when you have impressed upon your mind the scene thus placed before you by the parable, proceed to consider its spiritual meaning.

1st. Consider the work in the vineyard. The householder who goes out to hire laborers is God, our heavenly Father. The vineyard is His holy Church. The laborers hired at various hours of the day are those who are called to the Faith of Christ, and you are one of these. You too have the grace of this vocation, therefore forget not what St. Paschasius bids us bear in mind: We are not sent into this vineyard to be idle, but to work, each one according to his capabilities. To this rule there are no exceptions: Rich and poor, young and old, the healthy and the sick, the blind and the lame, each and all can and must work. And what is the work that they are to do? The saint tells us: The work we have to do is in our own souls, by mortifying our evil passions, subduing our sinful desires, rooting out sin and planting virtues. This is the work we are called to do in the vineyard; to dig it, to dress the soil, to plant it and cultivate the fruit; this is the work God has given you to do. Examine yourself, my soul; see how you have hitherto acquitted yourself of your duty; make a careful survey of the produce of your toil, the fruit you have gathered as the result of your labor in that vineyard.

2d. Consider the reward of your labor. Observe how God, in order to prevent you from becoming discouraged in the arduous work of tilling the ground of your heart, from feeling your daily mortifications and spiritual conflicts to be onerous and irksome, promises to recompense you for your labor. The laborers He has engaged are not to work for nothing; they are to receive the penny agreed upon as their wages. This penny is eternal felicity. That, as the pious Dionysius the Carthusian says, is the day's wages for which we work day by day, and which God pays every day to the soul when it departs out of this world.

Meditate attentively to-day, my soul, on this penny; contemplate in spirit the beauty, the joy, the glory of the Heaven which is promised you, and imprint that fair picture so deeply upon your mind that if the burden and heats of the day should press all too heavily upon you, the remembrance of the recompense laid up for you may serve to console and strengthen you, just as hired laborers cheerfully bear heat and cold, thirst and toil during the day because they look to receive the wages due to them at its close. And what are their wages? A few cents. What is that in comparison to the remuneration to which you can look forward?

3d. Consider the end of the labor. Turn again to the pleasant scene depicted in the parable, when the sun is sinking in the west, and the tired workman wipes the sweat from his brow, while the householder comes to give to each man his wages, wherewith to procure refreshment and recreation after his hard day's work. How welcome to the industrious laborer are the evening hours when day is done! How welcome to the devout Christian is the evening at the close of life's long day! O happy indeed shall we be when once we have entered upon eternal rest, when the heavenly Householder pays for temporal labor in eternal coin; when tribulation, tears, persecution, hunger, and thirst, heat and cold are altogether ended, to be followed by everlasting joy, everlasting felicity! Does not the bliss of this one evening, O Christian, far outweigh the suffering of the burden and heats of the day? But mark this, and retain it in your memory as the fruit of to-day's meditation: The evening is only pleasurable to the diligent workman. If you would have a happy day succeed to the evening of life, you must work right diligently in the vineyard of the Lord. If you are indolent, and do not work for the wages God offered you, deeming them insufficient, as did the discontented servant, if you only work for the sake of gaining applause, of satisfying your own passions, woe betide you, for in that case the evening of your life will not be followed by a bright and joyous day in Heaven, but by the eternal night of hell.

Wherefore labor diligently: labor in a right way before the dark night comes, and ask yourself in what special manner you shall employ yourself during the season of Lent in the vineyard of the Lord.

MONDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION UNDER THE FIGURE OF A WONDROUS BOOK.

Place before your eyes, my soul, the figure contained in the tenth chapter of the Apocalypse, where St. John, the prophet of the New Testament, tells us he was commanded to eat an open book which was given to him by an angel. And when he had eaten it, it was in his mouth sweet as honey, but in his stomach bitter as gall. This book is a symbol of our Lord's Passion.

1st. Consider how this book, enclosed for a time in Mary's virginal womb, was unclosed and opened to all the world at the time of His lowly birth, and how the different events succeeded one another like the pages of an open book: First His circumcision, when the first drops of blood were shed; then His agony and bloody sweat in the Garden of Olives; next the scourging and crowning with thorns; finally the nailing to the cross, whereby this wondrous book was unsealed for all time, and laid open to the whole world that the greatest mysteries might be read therein. Yes, this book is open to all without exception; the learned read it and find in its pages matter for the most profoundly erudit works, while the unlearned also read it and learn from it true wisdom. It is open to all, and those who read it, whether sick or in health, rich or poor, high or low, young or old, all find in it instruction, consolation, the best counsel, the highest wisdom. This book is open to you also, O my soul, for many long years it has lain open before you; why then have you read in it so little?

2d. Consider that this book, like the mystic book spoken of in the Apocalypse, must be eaten. As the stomach re-

ceives the food it eats, so the soul must receive and assimilate to itself this book by means of devout meditation, otherwise she will derive no nourishment from it. And whilst thus consuming it, the soul will taste the sweetness of honey and also the bitterness of gall. Our Lord's Passion is sweet as honey to the pious Christian; he will draw from it the courageous desire to follow our Lord. It is sweet as honey to the suffering; they will draw from it that which will alleviate their pain. It is sweet as honey to the dying; they extract from it strength and fortitude in their last hours. It is sweet as honey to all men of good will; they find in it the most efficacious means of salvation. But it is bitter, bitter as gall to the sinner, for it fills his soul with deepest compunction, when he remembers that he has been the cause of that Passion. And well for you, my soul, if you do not shrink from setting your lips, after the example of your Saviour, to the bitter chalice, filled with myrrh and gall. Well for you, if you rather do your utmost to call forth tears, bitter tears of compassion by attentive meditation on our Lord's Passion. For such bitterness as this is speedily followed by the sweetness of peace, the peace which is the reward of every true penitent.

3d. Consider that the wondrous book was given to St. John by an angel. If, my soul, you desire during this season of preparation for the Easter festival, to study with great spiritual profit the marvellous book of Christ's Passion, see that you receive that book only from the hand of your Guardian Angel; that is, see that you do not apply yourself to these meditations in a spirit of indifference, do not study this book merely from curiosity or habit, do not view the mysteries of our Lord's Passion simply as matter for mental inquiry and vain research, but enter upon your meditation in the company of your Guardian Angel, with holy dispositions, with all the fervor of your heart, all the powers of your soul. Each of these meditations ought to be for you a sweet season of mental prayer, of sympathy with and compassion for your suffering Saviour. Thus and thus only will you read with full

profit the pages of this mystic book, written in blood-red characters, in letters crimsoned with the blood drawn from His veins by the rods and scourges, the sharp thorns, the points of the nails. Nor will you ever lay down this singular document, upon which the angels gaze in never-ceasing wonder, with its letters inscribed upon the tender virginal flesh of the Saviour as upon finest parchment, without feeling hearty contrition at the thought that you by your sins helped to trace a considerable portion of the woful characters inscribed in the pages of that book.

TUESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE PRACTICAL BENEFIT THE RELIGIOUS DERIVES FROM MEDITATION ON OUR LORD'S PASSION.

Think, my soul, of the vast number of saints who for the space of an hour or more have kept their eyes fixed upon the crucifix; who in rapt meditation upon the sufferings of their crucified Lord have become oblivious of all around them; who have departed this life clasping the cross in their thin, white hands, with their eyes, fast glazing in death, fixed upon that sacred symbol. O what a wonderful book is this, read by so many, read so often, and yet never read to the end. Did we but understand how to do this, what infinite treasures, what an abundance of divine wisdom and celestial grâce might be drawn from it! And in fact, in the writings of the early Fathers we read of two monks, who left the world at the same time, one of whom was a very learned man, the other utterly ignorant. The learned one, continually engrossed with his studies, after a time found life in the cloister so wearisome, that he seriously thought of returning to the world. When his unlearned Brother became aware of his intention, he spoke to him with such force and unction of the advantages of the Religious state, that the heart of the wavering Brother was touched and he fully made up his mind to remain. And when he asked the other whence he, who did not even know how to read and write, had learnt

to speak so eloquently and had acquired so thoroughly the spirit of his Order, he answered as follows:

1st. "I read daily the book of our Lord's Passion, which is written in three different kinds of letters. One page of this book is written in black characters and teaches us to fear the judgment of God. The Evangelist tells us that Judas, after he had received the morsel unworthily, went out, adding: 'And it was night.' (St. John xiii. 30.) The darkness of night was around Judas and yet darker night reigned within him, the night of despair, by which he became a victim of divine justice without hope of redemption. Again, Jesus went out into the dark, black night on Mount Olivet, and there His troubled soul was filled with dread and apprehension of the death which He, burdened as He was with the guilt of our sins, anticipated with trembling fear. And lastly, when Jesus hung upon the cross for our iniquities, there was thick darkness over the earth for the space of three hours; and so heavily, so terribly did the wrath of the just God weigh upon Him—the sinless One—who had taken upon Himself the burden of our transgressions, that in unspeakable anguish of soul He cried aloud: 'Eloi, Eloi, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Now when I read those dark characters, my soul is filled with a salutary fear of God's justice, so that I gladly endure the austerities and penances of the monastic life in expiation of my sins." Do you, my soul, draw from the contemplation of our Lord's Passion this first, most useful lesson; learn to fear and tremble at the thought of the divine justice; thus penance will be made more easy to you, and you will be less likely to sin. Yet not in fear and trembling only are you to work out your salvation.

2d. Consider the other characters the Brother found in his book: the part written in red letters. "Those," he continued, "are the sufferings of our dear Lord by which His blood was shed; the agony and bloody sweat in the Garden of Olives, the awful loss of blood when He was scourged, the drops that trickled down from beneath the terrible crown of thorns, the streams that flowed from His

five sacred wounds upon the cross. Oh when I contemplate those crimsoned pages, when the blood-red letters are before my eyes, then bitter tears of contrition and of love fill my eyes and flow down my cheeks because of the charity and mercy of my God, ready to sacrifice the last drop of His blood for my sake. Kindled and inflamed by this love, I gladly and cheerfully bear all the hardships and trials of the religious state." O my soul, do you also study these pages written in letters of blood; immerse yourself by meditation in the infinite love and compassion of your suffering Saviour, and then the salutary fear you at first experienced in regard to the judgments of God will give place to sincere repentance and will gradually mount up to Heaven in the flame of an ardent love of God.

3d. Consider finally the last page of the Brother's wondrous book; it is written in letters of gold. "These," said the monk as he concluded his explanatory discourse, "are the glorious virtues that shone out prominently in the course of our Lord's Passion: His resignation to the will of God on Mount Olivet, His meekness in the hall of judgment, His patience at the pillar of scourging, the love of His enemies which He displayed on the cross; the self-renunciation of His whole life. And while reading these golden words, I feel myself inspired not to rest content in the path of contrition and penance, but to push onward, and emulating my divine Lord who was so rich in every virtue, to advance in religious perfection, and with the assistance of God's grace in daily conflict with my rebel nature to add evermore fresh golden ornaments to the circlet of virtue which is to be the crown of my life."— After hearing this exordium, the erudite monk threw aside his books and began to study the simple volume of his brother monk. This he did to such good purpose that he soon became not only a model penitent, but an exemplary Religious striving after the highest perfection.

My soul, to you I say: Go and do likewise!

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION AS A VICTORY OVER DEATH.

In old pictures our Lord is often represented upon the cross as a king, reigning from the cross. And this is what is the most wonderful of all, that at the very moment of His deepest abasement, when in His agony He writhes like a tortured worm; when, despised as a common criminal, He hangs on the tree of shame, at that very moment Jesus is in reality the great and mighty Conqueror and Subduer of the most formidable powers, and of death, the most potent of all.

1st. Consider how our suffering Lord overcomes death, and overcomes it, paradoxical as this may appear, by His own death. In dying Himself He becomes the Victor over death, since He takes from it that which makes it most to be dreaded, its eternity. For whereas before our Lord's Passion mankind was subject not only to temporal but also to eternal death, since His Passion death is a thing only appertaining to time, it is only a transition from mortality to immortality, from what is transitory to what is abiding, from temporal death to eternal life; at any rate, if man chooses that it should be so. And all this the great Conqueror achieved when to all appearances He was defeated by death. Apparently vanquished, He vanquished the foe; apparently subdued, He was the Subduer. Well may we marvel at the divine omnipotence and wisdom, manifested thus gloriously in our Lord's Passion! Let us also consider by what means Jesus in His sufferings became the Conqueror over death.

2d. He overcame death inasmuch as He took from it its sting. "O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. xv. 55) St. Paul exclaims, and St. Bernard remarks that since our Lord suffered, death no longer has a sting; it is a glad-some and joyous thing, for now the just, looking upon the suffering Saviour, gazing upon the crucifix which represents Him, die with a song of praise on their lips, with

jubilation in their heart. Death, formerly so bitter, so terrible to them, is now a sweet messenger, come to conduct them to a better life; it is to them the welcome end of an earthly existence replete with toil and sufferings; it opens to them the blissful portals of Heaven. Now they are able to say with St. Paul: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21) for by death I gain everlasting rest, everlasting joy, everlasting felicity. By death I cease to die and begin to live. O marvellous victory achieved by our suffering Lord!

3d. Consider however that it is only to the true Christian that all this applies. For as, previously to the Passion of Christ, death was a cruel enemy to the human race, an object of terror, the greatest of temporal evils, terrible even to the just, since it banished them to Limbo, so now, even subsequently to our Lord's Passion, death is equally an object of terror to all impenitent sinners, who will not avail themselves of the privileges that the sufferings of Christ procured for them, nay, who even trample under foot His precious blood. Woe betide those unhappy sinners! They go on their way—and that is what is most deplorable of all—in spite of the triumphant victory that our Lord in His Passion gained over death—they go on their way to meet a death which for them has a sharp sting, which for them is never-ending death—just as if Jesus had never suffered and died. O my soul, ask yourself, if you were to die to-day, what would death be to you? Meditate upon this, and take a serious resolve as to the manner in which you will profit by the Passion of our Lord, in order that the suffering Saviour may not have overcome death in vain for you.

THURSDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION AS A VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL.

To-day, my soul, place before you the extraordinary restlessness and incessant activity Satan displays in his endeavors by one means or another to rid himself of Jesus,

his formidable opponent, whom he tried in vain by his temptations in the desert to rob of all power to injure him. See how he incites Judas to act the traitor, how he stirs up the hatred of the Pharisees, how he deludes the common people and instigates them to wild fanaticism. And when at last the blows of the hammer resound, and the tortured Saviour is nailed to the cross, see the contemptuous, triumphant sneer with which the malicious foe exults over what he supposes to be his victory. Satan little thinks at that moment that he is the one who is defeated, that the blows struck at the Lamb of God are the destruction of his own dominion. And yet so it is. Jesus is in truth become through His Passion a Conqueror over hell as He is over death.

1st. Consider that through His sufferings our Lord undermines the foundations of Satan's kingdom, sin. It is sin that made Satan the Prince of this world; it is upon sin that he has built up his vast kingdom. Destroy these foundations, and the whole proud edifice he has reared upon them will fall to pieces. And now observe how the blood of Jesus Christ, shed in His Passion, takes away the sins of the world. One single drop would have sufficed to redeem the whole world from guilt; but it is not one drop alone that is shed—this atoning blood flows in streams; it is shed, not once, but repeatedly, so that in this super-abundant source of grace every sinner—past, present, and future—may cleanse himself from his iniquities and thereby break the fetters wherewith Satan held him in bondage. Yet the complete overthrow of the kingdom of the devil was not all that our Lord accomplished through His Passion; He did still more.

2d. Consider how since our Lord's Passion and in virtue of His cross Satan has been more and more thrust out of this world, in fulfilment of the words spoken by our Lord shortly before the commencement of His Passion: "Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." (St. John xii. 31.) Yes verily, in virtue of the suffering of the crucified Redeemer, the mighty foe was cast out of the hearts of the heathen, banished from their temples, to

give place to the cross which was raised over them. Pursued step by step, thrust out of one place after another by the disciples of our Lord, the great enemy of mankind finds himself at last expelled in the name of the Crucified from the bodies of those men in whom he sought to affect a lodgment when put to flight. And if in some places he yet to a certain extent holds sway, as soon as the cross, the emblem of our Lord's Passion, is set up there, and the holy Mass, the perpetual commemoration and renewal of that Passion, is celebrated there, his dominion must give way to the dominion of Christ. O what a glorious victory is this! A victory too, and this is the most remarkable feature in it, gained over the devil in consequence of his own exertions to elude it.

3d. Consider finally this observation of St. Augustine: The evil spirits are like snappish dogs which are chained up and therefore cannot hurt any one except those who of their own free will go within reach of their teeth. The devil, who attempted to overcome the holy virgin Justina, was forced to acknowledge that he had no power to harm those who were faithful servants of Christ. O my soul, lay this truth to heart: The divine Conqueror on the cross rendered the devil powerless to harm you. He chained up the dogs of hell. If you are so madly foolish as of your own accord to put your hand into their jaws, you will have no one but yourself to blame if you are mortally bitten. Alas! there are thousands of such demented beings, for whom Christ has defeated the devil in vain, who give themselves up into the power of one whose might is destroyed, who allow themselves to be captured by one who is himself a captive! Ask yourself, my soul, if, after all, you are not one of these persons. God grant that the meditation you have made to-day on this subject may be instrumental in opening your eyes, and that by contemplation of the sublime Victor over the powers of hell you may be admonished to follow more faithfully than you have hitherto done the exhortation of the apostle: "Resist the devil and he will fly from you." (St. James iv. 7.)

FRIDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION IN REGARD TO THE PERSONALITY
OF THE SUFFERER.

Fully nineteen hundred years have elapsed since our Lord's Passion and death. What a long time that is! And yet that Passion is as deeply, as vividly impressed upon the souls of thousands as if it were an event of quite recent occurrence; that Passion yet fills the heart of thousands with burning love, profound compassion, bitter contrition; it yet inspires thousands, nay millions, with eager desire to suffer and to die with Christ and for Christ. Is not this very surprising? Your surprise will soon be dispelled, my soul, if you consider who it was who thus suffered. It was God. Reflect upon this attentively, and then consider the following points:

1st. If a person of low degree, a child, or a mendicant is put to a violent death, this occurrence creates a little stir in the immediate surroundings of the victim, but it attracts little if any notice in a wider circle. But if a king or an emperor has been assassinated, all the world hears and talks of it. Now ask yourself, who is it whom the Jews put to an ignominious death upon the cross? It is the Son of God, the Lord of Heaven and earth, in comparison with whose majesty, grandeur and might, all the most powerful potentates of earth are mean and contemptible in the extreme. Indeed, if both men and angels were suddenly swept out of existence, this fact would not be as momentous, as horrible, as appalling as the truth embodied in these words: The Son of God is put to death upon the cross—*God is slain by man.* Nineteen hundred years are not enough, nay a million years, a whole eternity would not suffice to grasp the full import of this event, to gauge its full depth, to appreciate its horror to the full.

2d. When a valiant warrior came to David and told him that he had slain Saul, who was David's deadly enemy, and who being already mortally wounded could not under-

any circumstances have lived much longer, the generous-minded king was so horrified at the deed that he rent his clothes and commanded the murderer to be put to death instantly, because he had laid violent hands upon the Lord's anointed. What wouldst thou have said, O David, hadst thou been informed that not merely the Lord's anointed, but the Lord Himself had been slain? Thou wouldst not only have rent thy garments, thy very heart would have been rent asunder with grief and sorrow! Is it not therefore just, my soul, to say that nineteen centuries are not too many but too few, that all eternity is not too long to lament and bewail the cruel death our sins inflicted on the Son of God?

3d. It is related that the son of King Croesus, who was dumb, seeing a soldier raise his sword to strike his royal father, felt such horror at the deed that it unloosed his tongue, and he who had been mute from his birth cried aloud: "O man, do not slay the king!"

Consider, my soul, that when an act of incomparably greater horror was committed, when the Jews raised aloft the hammer whose deadly strokes fastened the Son of God to the cross, then all mute creation spoke by signs: The sun hid its light, the earth quaked, the rocks were cleft, the veil of the temple was rent in twain; by these phenomena Nature gave voice to her horror, and exclaimed aloud: "O man, do not slay thy God!" Now if irrational creatures thus mourn aloud, you ought not, O man, to keep silence. Nineteen hundred years ought not to prove too long but rather too short a period to praise and magnify the God who out of love to us gave Himself to be slain. Now do you perceive why it is that the Passion of Christ makes so permanent an impression on the soul? And can you at the same time understand how it is possible for any man to remain cold and indifferent, how any one can live in tranquillity, can eat and drink in peace, if the terrible, the awful consciousness rests upon him that he is guilty of a deed which caused silent Nature to lift her voice in horror—the consciousness that by mortal sin he is crucifying his God?

Horrified as you are, my soul, at the appalling crime of deicide, refrain from casting a stone at the Jews, and accuse yourself of its guilt. Bewail your sins, by which you are in a great measure inculpated in that crime, and pray from the bottom of your heart for all unhappy persons who—unaware of the heinousness of the deed—are in danger of crucifying the Son of God afresh by mortal sin.

SATURDAY AFTER SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION IN REGARD TO THOSE FOR WHOM
HE SUFFERED.

To-day, my soul, picture to yourself the Saviour as He stands, a spectaele to the infuriated multitude, so weak, so exhausted, so deplorable and pitiable an object that even the pagan governor, even Pilate himself, was moved to compassion and gave vent to his feelings in the sorrowful exclamation: "Behold the Man." Gaze, my soul, on your suffering Lord, print the image of this sad *Ecce homo* on your heart, and then ask yourself this question: For whom does He thus suffer?

1st. He suffers for mankind. Inquire of David, what man is, and he will answer you: "Every man living is vanity." (Ps. xxxviii. 6.) Ask holy Job, and he will tell you: "Man cometh forth as a flower and in a short time is destroyed." (Job. xiv. 2.) Ask the Wise Man, and he will acknowledge that man is as smoke that vanishes, a shadow, nothing. Ask God Himself, and He will tell you that you are but dust and ashes. And for such a miserable creature as this God endures death! It would be considered a generous action if a monarch were to expose his royal person to the danger of death for the sake of one of his courtiers, but if he were to do the same for one of the lowest menials employed in his stables or his kitchen, how astonished every one would be! Now however, we see the King of kings not only incurring the risk of death, but actually enduring death, a death no less ignominious than painful,

not indeed for the sake of those who form His court, the choirs of angelic spirits, but for creatures of a far lower type, for miserable, sinful mortals. Who is there who would not marvel at this? But it is much greater cause for marvel, nay, it is enough to make Heaven and earth aghast with horror, that man, whom God loved so greatly, should in his base ingratitude, never think of the God who suffered such torments, and suffered them for his sake.

2d. Consider that it is for evil-doers who had incurred the penalty of death that our Lord suffered. One reads sometimes in old books that when a king was sick, the lowest of his servants was put to death in order that from his blood a healing remedy might be prepared for his master. How abhorrent this remedy must have appeared to the royal patient! But what would be said if the position was reversed, and a king were to give his only, his most dearly loved son to be put to death, in order that from his blood a specific should be prepared for a sick servant, one who had brought his illness on himself by his depraved life? That is an impossible case, you will say; such charity is past conception. And yet you see that this act which you pronounce to be inconceivable, really took place. God permitted the blood of His only-begotten Son to be shed, in order that man, who through his own fault had contracted the fatal malady of sin, might have within his reach an antidote to its poison. O wonder of all wonders! But O the foul ingratitude, the barbarous cruelty which beggars all description, of those impenitent sinners who trample under foot the precious blood shed for their salvation, who are unheedful of the bitter pains endured for their sake!

3d. Our Lord suffered for His mortal enemy. Of all the creatures God placed upon the earth man alone has rebelled against his greatest Benefactor; for thousands of years he has offended and outraged his Creator, his heavenly Father, by transgressions great as the mountains, countless as the sand on the sea-shore. And it was for this, His mortal foe, that our Lord suffered and died. It is a great thing, to lay down one's life for a friend. It is

yet greater, to refrain from revenging oneself on an enemy; but to endure the most agonizing, the most disgraceful of deaths for that enemy is an act of such extraordinary sublimity, that in contemplation of it St. Bernard exclaims in astonishment: "O incomprehensible, inexpressible, unfathomable charity! Charity of which the height exceeds computation, the depth cannot be fathomed, the length is illimitable and the breadth immeasurable!" And yet, my soul, there is something still more incomprehensible, still more amazing; that is, the man who can look on our Lord's sufferings with cold indifference, who even adds to them by his persistence in sin. Are you perhaps such a one as he? If so, after this meditation can you doubt a moment longer as to what you ought to do, what you must do this very day, in order no more to be ranked with such company?

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD UNDER THE FIGURE OF THE DIVINE SEED.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the pleasing picture placed before you in to-day's Gospel. Behold Jesus surrounded by an attentive multitude, concerned about their eternal salvation, listening devoutly to His words; now it is the beautiful parable of the sower that they hear, who sows his seed with such various results. This Sower is our Lord Himself; even at this very moment, when He is speaking this parable, He is casting fruitful seed into the hearts of His hearers by every word He utters, and He does the same every time that He speaks to the faithful by the mouth of His representatives on earth. More especially is this the case with you, who are a Priest, a Religious, since daily, nay many times a day, He places before you His bitter Passion, thereby casting into your soul a grain of seed which might bear fruit a hundredfold, did it not

fall on the hard rock or among thorns. But perhaps you will ask when and how this seed is sown in your heart so frequently? Listen and I will tell you:

1st. The seed is sown as often as holy Mass is celebrated. The holy sacrifice is nothing else than the continual remembrance and renewal of the bitter Passion of Christ. At the elevation behold Him lifted up upon the cross; in the two species behold His flesh and blood, separated on the cross; at the breaking of the Host recall His departure out of this life, and in the consumption of the sacred elements behold His burial. Devout Christians who hear Mass piously stand with John and Magdalen beneath the cross on Calvary, their hearts full of charity and compunction. They do not find the time long, on the contrary, it is too short, so quickly does it pass while they gaze on the suffering Saviour, while they meditate upon His Passion. Wherefore accustom yourself, my soul, every time that you hear Mass, to keep our Lord's Passion present to your mind; it will not only keep you from distractions, but it will be a divine seed, which sown in your heart in the early morning, will assuredly bear good fruit during the day. Consider further, in what way the holy sacrifice recalls our Lord's Passion.

2d. You are reminded of it as often as you see or put on the sacerdotal vestments, or clothe yourself in your habit. The amice, which the Priest places on his shoulders, represents the cloth wherewith the suffering Redeemer was blindfolded, when He was buffeted on the face. The alb represents the white garment, the robe of ignominy in which He was vested by Herod's orders. The girdle represents the cord wherewith He was bound, the maniple and stole the scourges wherewith He was beaten. Finally the chasuble, on one side of which we see the pillar of scourging, on the other the cross, represents the purple garment wherewith the soldiers in mockery clothed the patient Jesus. If you, O Priest of God, were to remember the sacred significations of the vestments while vesting for Mass, instead of allowing your thoughts to wander, or indulging in idle conversation, how differently,

you would say Mass, and how abundantly this seed would bear fruit! And in the same manner when, in the morning, you who are a monk put on the habit of your Order, remember that the hood (or in the case of nuns, the veil) represents the crown of thorns which the Saviour wore in expiation of your proud and evil thoughts; the habit—an object of scorn and derision to the world—resembles the robe of ignominy arrayed in which our Lord atoned for your vanity and human respect; your girdle should remind you of the cords wherewith Jesus was bound in expiation of the undue license you allow yourself, the knots representing the weals made by the scourges on His tender flesh, because of your love of ease and comfort; finally when you put on your sandals remember how Jesus traversed with bare feet the stony way of the cross; keep these things, I say, in remembrance and oh how differently you will go about your daily work, how plentiful will be the harvest produced during the course of the day by the seed sown in its early hours!

3d. Furthermore, this seed is sown whenever the Religious meet in choir to say their office. At these times, my soul, how sadly your thoughts are distracted; to what an extent the thorns of vain imaginations choke the seed, and prevent it from bearing fruit a hundredfold. It would be otherwise with you, if, as the Fathers suggest, you were to keep our Lord's Passion continually before your mind. If while preparing to say matins, you would recall to your mind the night which our Lord passed in prayer and agony in the Garden of Olives, and in this spirit continued to say the Office; you would thus at prime remember how He was dragged as a malefactor from one tribunal to another; at tierce you would recall His condemnation to the death of the cross; at sext His crucifixion, and at none His death would be present to your thoughts. At vespers your imagination would picture the touching scene when the dead Christ lay on the lap of His sorrowing Mother, and finally at compline you would assist in spirit at the burial of your Lord. Were you to do this, your prayer would certainly be less subject to distractions

and the seed sown in your heart would bear fruit a hundredfold.

Courage then, my soul! If hitherto this divine seed of our Lord's Passion has been daily cast into your heart in vain; if it has not been able to strike root on the stony surface of your tepidity; if it has been choked by the thorns of worldly cares, or been devoured on the wayside of your frivolous diversions by the birds of the air, vain thoughts and idle words, consider gravely to-day what you must do henceforth, in order that it may bear fruit in you, bear fruit a hundredfold.

MONDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE MANIFESTED IN OUR LORD'S PASSION.

Imagine, my soul, that you see three men led out to execution. Of two of them it may be affirmed with certainty that they are common robbers and criminals; the third is dragged to the gallows with them, and hung between the two thieves. What ignominy! Now see, it is your Lord who endures this shame; He is hung upon the gallows, nailed, that is, to the cross. Look upon Him to-day long and earnestly in the utmost depth of His abasement, in the exceeding greatness of His weakness. Behold Him a victim, deeply humiliated and utterly defenseless, given over to the mercy of His enemies! And yet, my soul, even through the gloom of this abject abasement, this extremity of weakness, that attribute shines forth which indisputably proclaims Him to be God, His divine omnipotence. O wondrous mystery of the Passion!

1st. Consider the great miracle which the omnipotence of the Crucified wrought in Nature. At one and the same time in which He hung helpless upon the cross, despised and blasphemed by the lowest rabble, even by a wretched criminal condemned for robbery and murder, at that moment of unparalleled ignominy and apparent impotence,

He performs acts which surpass all the powers of the universe; for it is He, the crucified Saviour, who causes the sun, the burning orb of light, to hide its radiance, and the adamantine rocks to burst asunder with a tremendous crash; who calls the dead to come forth from their sepulchres, and without moving a finger of those hands transfixed with cruel nails and fastened to the cross, rends the heavy veil of the temple from top to bottom. O mighty Saviour! Let us not be scandalized by Thy weakness when we behold Thee on the cross, but let that cross, the sign of impotence and ignominy, be our most powerful defence against the hostile powers of nature, lightning and tempest, earthquakes and conflagrations.

2d. Consider further the great miracle which the omnipotence of the Crucified wrought on human nature. He is nailed to the cross, forsaken and helpless; He is treated as the outcast of the people; there is nothing attractive about Him; and yet, when He is lifted up upon the cross, in His omnipotence He draws all men to Him. He draws to Himself the heart of the good thief, a heart hardened by long continuance in sin, but melted by His grace. He draws to Himself the centurion, so that he openly exclaimed: "Indeed this was the Son of God!" He draws to Himself the multitude, at first so infuriated, raging in their hatred, vomiting forth maledictions. He causes them to strike their breasts in contrition, and return to the city in repentant sorrow. O all-powerful Jesus, powerful, omnipotent in Thy cross and Passion! Grant that this Thy Passion may also soften my hard heart, and grant that as then, so now by my instrumentality and that of my fellow-laborers, the hearts of obdurate sinners may be softened by virtue of the almighty power of Thy Passion.

3d. Consider finally the great miracle which the omnipotence of the Crucified wrought on the world at large. For many hundred years the greatest men of the Old Testament, the prophets, preached penance to mankind, their preaching being supported by divine judgments, their words confirmed by signs and wonders; but they

spoke in vain. For three whole years our Lord taught mankind with a wisdom at which all were astonished; He performed actions, He wrought miracles which none but God Himself was capable of accomplishing, but all in vain. Twelve fishermen, a few women, and others, mostly of the poorer class, were all the converts He made. But as soon as He began to subject Himself to the shame and bitterness of the Passion, when, under the semblance of a malefactor, He expired on the disgraceful tree, then—O marvellous power of the Passion—all gives way before the crucified God. Nations and tribes abjure their idolatrous worship; wild barbarians put their necks under the yoke of the cross like gentle lambs; that which was the token of shame becomes the highest ornament on the crown of kings and emperors, and Jesus, suffering and abased, is the object of profoundest reverence, of most fervent love throughout all the world. Wherefore, my soul, bow down in wonder and admiration at this deep mystery of divine omnipotence, and make this your special petition to God to-day that the salutary effect of His all-powerful Passion may also be experienced by you and all unhappy sinners.

TUESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE DIVINE JUSTICE MANIFESTED IN OUR LORD'S PASSION.

Whilst gazing upon the cross whereon our Lord is suffering, your soul will be filled with amazement at the infinite greatness of the love of God, and you are too apt to overlook the other attribute of the Deity which made itself seen in so awful a manner in the Passion of the Son of God—His infinite justice. Recall to mind the different times how the just God displayed this attribute in the most terrible way, when He sent the deluge to destroy all that lived upon the earth, when He overwhelmed Sodom by fire from heaven; and when you have suffi-

ciently realized the magnitude of His avenging justice, proceed to consider how it was manifested in the Passion of our Lord.

1st. Consider what the justice of the Eternal Father demanded from His divine Son. Although the Son of God by His omnipotence might easily have delivered man from the power of the devil, yet He would not do this without satisfying divine justice to the full. Now this justice requires that the individual who has sinned should make satisfaction either in his own person or in that of another. Inasmuch however as the God whom man has offended is infinite, justice demands that the satisfaction made should also be infinite. But as, on the other-hand, it is not in the power of man, a finite creature, to make the infinite satisfaction required of him, the Son of God took upon Himself to make it in his stead.

2d. Consider how it was that our Lord could make the satisfaction due to divine justice. As God it was impossible for Him to do this, for being Himself God, there was no Being greater than Himself. He was in fact the One whom man had offended. Wherefore He united His divine nature to the human nature, in order that by this means man might pay the debt he owed to divine justice, since His divine nature gave infinite value and merit to the finite satisfaction He made in His sacred humanity. O marvellous wisdom, which devised this means whereby alone divine justice could be appeased! Think upon this: It was impossible for a God to suffer, therefore our Lord suffered as man, and by His divinity gave infinite value, infinite power of satisfaction to His human sufferings. Reflect attentively on this profound mystery, my soul; let it awaken within you astonishment and admiration.

3d. Consider what were the particular sufferings which divine justice demanded from the Son of God. Afflictions, temporal death and eternal damnation were the chastisements which a just God awarded to sin. And as our Lord took upon Himself our iniquities it followed as a matter of course that He should bear as far as was possible the penalty attached to them. O see, my soul, how during

three and thirty years He endured all the trials and tribulations of life on earth in His own person, the miseries which, as the punishment of sin, are attached to our earthly pilgrimage. Consider how He suffered the death of the cross, paying in our stead the penalty of temporal death imposed on us as a chastisement; consider how He gave Himself into the power of His enemies and endured the most terrible tortures of mind and body in order that we might escape the eternal death to which we were condemned, that we might not be delivered into the power of the devil to be tormented in hell to all eternity. O how strict, how pitiless is divine justice!

How terrible a fate, therefore, to fall into the hands of a just God! If divine justice was so relentless in exacting from the Son of God all that was its due, well may you tremble, O miserable sinner; well may you count no sacrifice too great lest, in spite of the satisfaction made by the Saviour in His Passion, you should, if you are impenitent, experience the merciless severity of God in His justice.

WEDNESDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSION AS A PROOF OF THE HEINOUSNESS OF SIN.

Pass briefly in review the meditation you made yesterday, and recall to mind the conception you then formed of the justice of God the Father, exercised with such strict severity upon His divine Son. Alas! it is for our sakes that the Redeemer has rendered Himself amenable to divine justice, that He goes forth on the way to Calvary, staggering beneath the weight of the cross, burdened with our guilt and the chastisement of our guilt, to shed His blood in order to appease the justice of God. O think upon this, my soul, and let your imagination picture to you the following scene:

1st. Imagine yourself about to enter in at the gate of

a town where you are a stranger. You see a young man exceedingly beautiful and attractive in appearance, one who has always been a model of good conduct to all his companions, bound with cords, being led out to execution. You ask the reason of this, and you are told that this youth is the only son of the king, who has been condemned to an ignominious death because he took an apple from his father's garden; no intercession, no entreaties were of any avail; the king was inexorable; he insisted upon the execution of the sentence once passed. How astonished you would be did you see and hear such things! You would scarcely be able to believe your eyes and your ears. You would certainly say to yourself: God forbid that I should commit any theft, of however trifling a nature, in this country! For if justice is administered in these regions in so stern and rigorous a manner that not even the king's own son, endowed with such beauty and grace, is spared, though his offence is so trivial, what fate would befall me, an alien, were I to transgress the laws? Oh, how this king must hate and abhor the crime of theft, since he inflicts so terrible a penalty on his own son because of it. Now, my soul, let us see the practical application of this parable.

2d. Consider how it is all true in regard to the suffering Redeemer. Of a truth He is in Himself perfectly innocent, He has committed no misdeed, and the Eternal Father Himself bore witness to His being His well-beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. Yet, notwithstanding all this, because Adam stole an apple in paradise, the garden of God, and the Son of God took upon Himself to pay the penalty of that crime, the strict justice of the Most High would not be appeased unless this His Son, His only-begotten and beloved Son, shed His own blood and died a malefactor's death upon the cross, amid cruel mockery and unparalleled tortures. Ponder deeply, my soul, on this awful mystery of the rigor of the divine justice; and when you are sufficiently impressed by it, proceed to meditate on the next point.

3d. Consider how hateful and abominable a thing sin

must be in the sight of God, how heavily it must weigh in the balance of His justice, if He punishes one sin so severely in the person of our Lord. Well may the holy Pope St. Gregory exclaim: We may gather from the shameful, the agonizing death of the Son of God what is the magnitude of the punishment due to our sins. And yet, my soul, you are not afraid to commit mortal sin against a God whom you know to hold sin in the utmost abhorrence, and to chastise it most severely. In the dominions of the king of whom we spoke above you would assuredly under no considerations have committed a theft, yet in the kingdom of the heavenly Monarch you boldly add sin to sin, although He is no less just, no less stern, and you know that His eye is ever upon you and He can at any moment carry out the sentence of death upon you. Endeavor to realize to-day the momentous gravity of sin; impress upon your mind how hateful it must be to a God who punishes it so rigorously, and in conclusion pray for yourself and your fellow Christians, that in the moment of temptation they may remember this truth.

THURSDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE SORROWFUL LEAVE WHICH OUR LORD TOOK OF HIS MOTHER BEFORE HIS PASSION.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the touching scene when our Lord took leave of His beloved Mother. Imagine that you behold the holy Virgin who loved her divine Son with the deepest, tenderest affection, at the moment when that Son came to her with the terrible tidings: "My hour is come; I am about to enter upon My Passion, to go to meet death." O words of dread, how you must have pierced as with a sharp sword the loving heart of the Mother of God! Reflect, my soul, upon this melancholy scene.

1st. Consider how in all probability the holy Virgin raised her eyes streaming with tears towards heaven, and in the first burst of maternal grief uttered this fervent

petition: "O my Father, is it not possible for Thee to redeem the human race otherwise than by the awful death that awaits my dearest Son? I beseech Thee, let this chalice pass. And if it be Thy holy will that He should drink it, grant, O heavenly Father, grant, O my beloved Son, that I may drink of it also. Yes, with Thee, my divine Child, I fain would suffer, I fain would die. And if Thou dost not concede this favor that I ask of Thee, then call me first out of this life, so that I may not witness Thy agony. But if this should not be in accordance with Thy holy will, at least give me Thy last benediction, in order that I may be enabled to bear this grief without my heart being broken by its intensity."

2d. Consider what we may imagine the divine Redeemer to have replied to this touching entreaty on His Mother's part: "It is indeed the will of God that I should drink the bitter chalice of suffering and death. Soon thy virginal eyes will behold Me pass away from this mortal life. The Father wills it, and His will is sacred to us. But it is not His will that thou shouldst drink of this chalice and follow Me to death. I must leave thee behind for the solace of My apostles and disciples, that by thee they may be encouraged and strengthened to believe on Me. Nor is it the will of God that thou shouldst die before Me, for in that case thy pure, immaculate, holy soul must go down into the shades of Limbo, since only by My death and resurrection will the portals of Heaven be opened to all believers. One request however will be granted to thee; I will give thee My blessing; it will fortify thee to bear bravely the Passion of thy Son; nay more, in virtue of this blessing thou wilt be My only consolation in the hour of death; thou wilt endure to the end, standing beneath the cross until I draw My last breath."

3d. Now my soul, contemplate in spirit the blessed Virgin; see how she humbly kneels, her countenance bedewed with tears, to receive her Son's last benediction, and give Him one last maternal embrace. O sorrowful parting, the like of which was never seen in all the world's history! O saddest separation, more bitter than death itself! This

was the first wound inflicted by the sword of sorrow on both the Redeemer and His beloved Mother. Mary's soul was then indeed pierced by the sword foretold by holy Simeon; it was the introduction to her dolors, the first plunge into that ocean of sorrow in which the maternal heart of the Mother of God was immersed during her Son's Passion, and which merited for her the title of Queen of Martyrs, bestowed on her by the Church. You, however, my soul, must remember with deep contrition, that by this first sad separation your Lord expiated your first departure from God, your first fall into sin. Wherefore implore Jesus and Mary to-day, for the sake of what they suffered at this cruel parting, to have compassion on all those who are in danger, by their first fall into sin, of separating themselves from Jesus and from His blessed Mother Mary.

FRIDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE LAST SUPPER.

It is night, the greatest, most memorable night since that whereon Jesus Christ was born into the world. Now for the last time our Lord gathers His apostles around Him, in order to celebrate the Last Supper with them. Deep gravity, a chastened sadness marks His features and those of His apostles. He knows, and they have a presentiment of what is about to happen, hence the solemnity, the seriousness that pervades the guest chamber where the Last Supper is to be held. Imagine, my soul, that you are present in that solemn assembly; gaze in spirit on your Lord and the twelve apostles who surround Him; observe the pensive, sorrowful expression of every countenance.

1st. Consider how our Lord performs an act of humility as a prelude to the great work of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and the commencement of His Passion. As the initial act of His public ministry, His bap-

tism, was an act of humility, so is also that whereby He inauguates His sacerdotal work, the washing of His disciples' feet. How pregnant with instruction is this for you, my soul! Only contemplate your Saviour; imprint on your mind the touching scene of the washing of feet, and reflect upon it. Consider that He to whom God the Father gave all power in heaven and on earth, He whose sublimity and grandeur fills angels with amazement, kneels on the ground like a slave and washes His disciples' feet; and this service of love is rendered to those who, before many hours have passed, will forsake and deny Him in the most dastardly and disgraceful manner. Picture to yourself your Lord kneeling before Judas, who purposes to betray Him; imagine that you hear Him say to the unhappy traitor: "Behold Me prostrate at thy feet; if thou hast any cause for complaint against Me, tell Me what it is and I will make amends to thee. I wash thee with water now; I am willing to wash thy soul to-morrow in My blood, if only thou wilt desist from thy evil design." Does not this charity stir your soul within you; is not your heart kindled with love to this most loving Jesus; will you not, witnessing such humility on His part, from the bottom of your heart renounce your pride, your haughty and imperious bearing towards your Brethren, your Sisters in religion?

2d. Consider the institution of the Blessed Sacrament and its signification. Look upon your Redeemer at this moment: A supernatural light rests upon His sacred countenance, His voice assumes a tone of the tenderest love and at the same time of deep solemnity, as He pronounces the words of sublime mystery whereby the miracle of transubstantiation is accomplished. O how immeasurable was the importance of that act, performed amid the silence of that solemn night, how vast its importance for our Lord Himself, for His apostles, for the whole Church! For our Lord the Last Supper was a marriage-feast, the inauguration of His Passion and death; in it He gave a pledge that on the morrow He would suffer death for the world's salvation; for this flesh which He then gave to

His apostles to eat was the flesh of the sacrificial Victim; this blood, of which He bade them drink, was the blood that was to be shed on the altar of the cross. Thus the sacrifice of the cross was offered beforehand on the night in question, in a mystic and spiritual manner; it was accomplished in will; in the Last Supper the sacrifice of the cross was anticipated, just as in the holy Mass it is commemorated and perpetuated. For the apostles the Last Supper was of the very highest importance, inasmuch as they, receiving Holy Communion for the first time, were admitted to the most intimate union with Christ; and if that same night, in the confusion and bewilderment of their minds during the time of their Master's Passion and death they still remained true to Him at heart, it was because He had taken up His dwelling in their hearts by Holy Communion. Finally, for the Church the great importance of the Last Supper consists in this, that our Lord, in the New Testament that He made in the cenacle at Jerusalem, bequeathed to her her choicest treasure and chief riches. The adorable Sacrament of the Altar, which Jesus left as a legacy to His Church, is the vital principle of her being. It is her heart, of which every Mass that is celebrated is a pulsation, sending her life-blood, the blood of Jesus Christ, into every vein, imparting to every member of her body life, growth, and well-being. Hence it may be said that in a certain sense the Church was founded on Holy Thursday—at any rate the principle of life was given her. What abundant matter for attentive meditation this subject affords us!

3d. Consider the persons who partook of this Last Supper. They were the twelve apostles. Alas! when our Lord gave them Holy Communion, sorrow must have filled His heart, for this first administration of Holy Communion was an earnest of the treatment that He would receive in the Sacrament of the Altar for all time. Four classes of communicants are represented by these twelve disciples. Judas received Communion unworthily, and our Lord saw prospectively the countless sacrileges which would be committed in the future. Woe betide the wretched Judas! Even

while at table he has already crucified his Lord, maltreated His sacred body, sacrilegiously shed His precious blood. Peter is typical of the second class of communicants. He did, it is true, receive Communion worthily, but very soon after fell into sin, and alas! how many imitators has he had since that day! A third class is represented by the nine other apostles. They too communicated worthily, but without much spiritual profit, for that self-same night in their cowardly fear they abandoned their Master and fled, although they did not go so far as to betray or deny Him. How many, think you, have done the same in subsequent times? Finally, John symbolizes the fourth class of communicants. He was the only one who received Holy Communion worthily and with due profit; he alone was faithful to his Lord; he alone followed Him to Calvary; he alone stood beneath His cross. It was not the first of the apostles, it was the most humble, the most loving of Christ's chosen band, who thus communicated and whom the Christian should propose to himself as his model. To which of these four classes do you, my soul, belong?

SATURDAY AFTER SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S PASSAGE OVER THE BROOK CEDRON.

To-day, my soul, follow your Lord in spirit when He quits the cenacle; accompany Him as He wends His way towards Mount Olivet. It is already night. When Jesus with His apostles reached the gate, the moon had not yet risen over the mountains, and it was in a holy, recollected frame of mind that they passed in silence over the brook Cedron. Keep this picture before your eyes while you meditate on the following points:

1st. The brook Cedron was one of those mountain streams which are only full in the rainy season; at other times their waters run dry, and there is nothing but mud or stones in the bed of the torrent. On that account this

brook over which Jesus went forms an excellent image of the vanity of this world, its riches, its joys, its honors. Do we not see this stream widening its banks for a certain time in the case of some individuals? Then all of a sudden its waters dry up—death comes to the worldling and all is over with him. What remains to him of the volume of waters that rushed on their headlong course—his wealth, his pleasures, his dignities? Nothing but a heap of mire, a handful of ashes in the grave and a stone over it. Wherefore happy is he who on his entrance into the priesthood or the Religious state has already crossed the brook Cedron!

2d. Represent to yourself the Saviour passing over the brook Cedron, and fancy you hear His voice saying to you: “See, O Christian soul, see Me now alone and on foot crossing this brook to-night with a terrible fate awaiting Me. Only a short time before when I came in festive pomp from Mount Olivet, I passed over it riding upon an ass, accompanied by hosannas and shouts of rejoicing, by the acclamations of the Jewish people. Now see what has become of this torrent of jubilation, this deification of My person, how quickly it has all dried up and vanished! Now they no longer want Me for their king. Instead of giving Me the title of king they designate Me as a deceiver of the people; instead of a robe of regal purple they put on Me a garment of derision; instead of a golden diadem they place on My head a crown of thorns. Learn thence, O Christian soul, how inconstant is the world; trust not in its favor; it will prove but a mountain torrent, to-day a mighty, rushing stream, to-morrow dried up and gone!”

3d. Consider that Jesus had to cross the brook Cedron before coming to the Mount of Olives, where He began to suffer for man’s redemption, and whence He ascended into Heaven. The mystic meaning attaching to this brook has already been pointed out in the two first parts. And now, my soul, if you desire to share in the saving graces purchased by our Lord’s Passion; if you desire to mount up to the celestial garden of perpetual joy; if you desire also to ascend to heaven from this world, symbolized by

the Mount of Olives, then you must first of all pass over the brook Cedron; that is to say, you must renounce all attachment to the world and all worldly possessions. Is this so with you? Have you not ever, since you left the world, felt a stealthy longing for it? have you not ever returned in desire to its deceptive seductions, to the brook Cedron? Examine your conscience in regard to this, and form your resolutions for the future.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE BLIND MAN IN THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Endeavor to realize vividly the scene St. Luke describes in to-day's Gospel. On the high road near Jericho a blind man sat by the wayside begging an alms from the pilgrims journeying up to Jerusalem for the feast. When in answer to his inquiries, he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, a gleam of consolation lighted up his soul, a ray of sunshine brightened the gloom of his perpetual night. Animated by the hope of receiving from Jesus an alms more valuable than any which his fellow men could bestow, he lifted up his voice and cried aloud: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!" (St. Luke xviii. 38.)

1st. Consider the melancholy lot of the blind man. For him the sun gives no light, no stars spangle the firmament of heaven, no flowers deck the face of the earth; the sweet azure of the sky, the pleasing verdure of the meadows are lost upon him; the roseate hues of sunset, the varied tints of the rainbow, the fair forms and brilliant colors that delight the human eye do not exist for him; he is doomed to perpetual night, perpetual darkness. How pitiable is his condition! Now if mere physical blindness is so sad a calamity, you may judge, my soul, how truly deplorable is the state of the spiritually blind, of those unhappy men who do not know themselves, who deem their spiritual condition to be other than it is, better, less dangerous,

happier. Such spiritual blindness is indeed a sad misfortune! It is the curse of the spiritual life, for self-knowledge is the foundation whereon the spiritual life rests. All theologians and Doctors of the Church, notably St. Augustine and St. Bernard, agree in declaring self-knowledge to be the most sublime and most useful of all sciences and indispensable to progress in the spiritual life. Consider this to-day, my soul, and ponder the wise saying of blessed Brother Giles: "Whoso does not know himself shall not be known," that is to say he will not be known by Him who said to the foolish virgins: "I know you not." (St. Matt. xxv. 12.)

2d. Consider how the blind man sought to be delivered out of his deplorable condition. St. Luke tells us: "He cried out, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He entreats, he prays to Jesus. It is in prayer that he primarily seeks assistance. Learn from this, my soul, that in order to emerge from the sad state of spiritual blindness and attain true self-knowledge you must pray in the first place. For the celestial light of divine grace can alone dispel the darkness of our hearts. Without it no scrutiny, no examination of conscience avails aught. Remember the well-known adage, inscribed on a heathen temple of old, *Nosce te ipsum*, Know thyself. And yet how few of the heathen possessed that self-knowledge! It is only the light of divine grace that leads to such knowledge and for that grace man must ask. This is the reason why St. Augustine so often sent up this petition: "Thou art ever the same, O my God! Grant that I may know Thee, that I may know myself." And we know that St. Francis was in the habit of repeating again and again: "Who art Thou, my God? and what am I?" As St. Bonaventure truly says: When a ray of sunshine is let into a room, one sees in the sunbeam a thousand mites of dust which were invisible before, and in like manner when the light of grace penetrates the darkness of our hearts, the soul becomes aware of the slightest imperfections and discerns a thousand defects which are not apparent to those who are not enlightened by that living light,

and consequently imagine that no such deficiencies exist. Lay to heart these sound words, and in future always begin your examination of conscience, your study to obtain self-knowledge, by praying to be enlightened by divine grace.

3d. Consider that the blind mendicant would not allow himself to be deterred from crying aloud for help, although "many rebuked him, that he might hold his peace;" mark also that when, as St. Mark tells us, he came to Jesus "casting off his garment he leaped up." (St. Mark x. 50.) Ven. Bede comments thus on this passage: "Let us imitate the example of this blind beggar. Let us by stripping off all worldly hindrances facilitate the glad elevation of the soul to God; let us hasten to the Dispenser of light, that light which only the angels and we can behold, and to which we must attain by the path of Faith." There is nothing the devil dreads more than that we should soar aloft to God by means of self-knowledge, enlightened by the light of Faith and divine grace. That is why he rebukes the blind that they should hold their peace; that is why he lays in our way innumerable obstacles and impediments, to prevent us from entering upon that close scrutiny of our own heart which would lead to self-knowledge. Hence it is that we are beset with distractions when we examine our conscience. Hence the constant pretexts suggested to us for omitting, for postponing that task. But you, my soul, must imitate the blind man; do not let yourself be led astray; strip off, cast aside the cloak which conceals the poverty of your spiritual condition, and make a special resolution to-day to scrutinize your own heart during this Lenten-tide, and make daily progress in self-knowledge.

MONDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE REASON WHY OUR LORD COMMENCED HIS PASSION
IN A GARDEN AND DID NOT TAKE WITH HIM EIGHT
OF HIS DISCIPLES.

Contemplate your Redeemer, my soul, at the time when, together with His apostles, He reached the Garden of Olives. Darkness wraps the face of the earth, but a bright moon illumines the heavens. Jesus is very sorrowful; He announces to His dismayed disciples the dangers impending over them. Selecting three whom He will take with Him into the interior of the Garden, to the other eight He says: "Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray." (St. Matt. xxvi. 36.) It is a melancholy scene that is here presented to view. Already the fear and anguish of His Passion have invaded our Lord's soul, when He parts from the disciples, who see Him go with feelings of consternation and vague forebodings of evil.

1st. Consider why Our Lord commenced His Passion in a garden. For this reason: Because it was His will to recover in a garden what had been lost in a garden, the salvation and eternal happiness of mankind. In the Garden of Eden Adam stretched out his hands to the forbidden fruit, and thereby brought himself and all his posterity into the bondage of the devil; for that cause our Lord stretches out His hands in the Garden of Olives to yield Himself as a captive to the myrmidons of the devil and thereby accomplish our redemption. In the Garden of Eden through his pride and prevarication Adam caused his own fall and that of the whole human race, and for that cause Jesus casts Himself on to the ground, into the dust in the Garden of Olives, in order by His humility to raise us who have fallen so low. Finally Jesus wills to begin in the garden that conflict whereby the glorious portals of the garden of paradise, long closed against us, were to be reopened; through His sufferings in the garden He, the sinless One, will purchase for us admittance

into that celestial garden from which sinful concupiscence has excluded us. Marvel at and admire the divine wisdom, and learn hence that wherein you have sinned, therein you must do penance.

2d. Consider that it was out of consideration for their frailty that our Lord did not permit the eight apostles to accompany Him into the garden. He knew that their faith was not as strong and steadfast as that of the other apostles. It might easily have happened that the sight of their Master trembling, oppressed by fear and sadness, might have been to them an occasion of scandal, or even of falling, that they might have been led to doubt His divinity. Our Lord in His mercy desires to avoid this. Learn hence, my soul, to exercise patience and forbearance towards the weaker brethren. Above all take heed lest you give them cause to take scandal. Do not, if you are a Superior, require too much of them; learn of Jesus to distinguish between the strong and the weak, the perfect and the imperfect. And if you are a subordinate, see in like manner that you are patient with your weaker brethren; do not take umbrage if exceptions are made in their favor, if they are spared, or are permitted to do what is forbidden to others. You are not scandalized because sick people receive Holy Communion in their beds, while those who are whole have to receive it in the church and on their knees; well, in other things make the same wise distinction between the perfect and the imperfect, and you will spare yourself and others much cause for regret both in time and in eternity.

3d. Consider also that our Lord left the eight apostles outside the garden for the purpose of trying their patience. The stronger disciples have to be approved by their fortitude in conflict, the weaker by their patience; and if our Lord excludes them from participation in the mysteries of His Passion, if He shows less confidence in them than in the other greater apostles, they ought to accept this with humility, without feelings of envy or ill will. How necessary it is for you, my soul, to take example by our Lord's disciples in this respect. If you perceive

that God has endowed your brother with more talents than He has bestowed on you, that He has lavished on him greater favors than on you, that He destines him for higher things than He destines you, bear this patiently, acquiesce in it without jealousy; say not only with your lips but in the sincerity of your heart that you know yourself to be unworthy of similar privileges, and then you will by your humility be equally acceptable in God's sight. And if you see your Superior appointing others to posts, employing them in functions from which you are excluded, bear this patiently; do not envy your brethren. Remember that St. Peter, whom our Lord took with Him into the garden, afterwards fell, while his brother Andrew, who was left outside, did not prevaricate; and although he did not enjoy the same privilege as St. James, he ranks as high as this apostle, who was one of the three chosen to accompany our Lord. Whether you have much or little, that much or little is not your own; it is God's gift.

TUESDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE REASON WHY OUR LORD TOOK THE THREE APOSTLES WITH HIM INTO THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

To-day picture to yourself our Lord entering the Garden of Olives with Peter, James and John. It is a solemn moment. The three chosen apostles already see their Master overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness; already on His countenance, usually expressive of heavenly peace, they see signs of fear and dread, of anguish and horror; now, and this is yet more terrible, they are to behold their Master in His hour of deepest abasement. What is the reason of this? Why are these three apostles chosen for this rather than the others?

1st. Consider that the apostles who are with their Master on Olivet are the same who were with Him on Thabor. They who beheld the Lord in His glorification must now behold Him in His humiliation. This is the

way God is wont to deal with His servants. He invariably visits those with greater tribulations to whom He has previously given greater graces and consolations. Wherefore if you experience extraordinary sweetness and consolation in prayer, special ease in obedience to God's commandments and the observance of your Rule, if you can bear trials and sufferings with unusual cheerfulness, then prepare yourself; soon this Thabor will be exchanged for Olivet. Consider that, as St. Gregory says, those persons expose themselves to bitter disappointment who imagine all difficulties are overcome because they experience sweetness, fervor and devotion in the service of God, although they are but beginners; they ought on the contrary to consider that such marks of God's favor are but the caresses He bestows on children, who will soon be subjected to severer discipline, and weaned from the love of the world. At first a gardener waters young plants freely; when they have grown stronger he does so less often.

2d. Consider that the apostles who went with our Lord on to Mount Olivet were those whom He loved most. Peter was the one He had chosen as the rock on which His Church was to be founded; John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and James was the first who was to receive the crown of glory. These were the three who were to go with Him to Olivet, who were to witness His agony. Learn from this, my soul, learn that it is a mark of singular favor and special love on God's part, if He takes us with Him on to Olivet, if He sends us sufferings and afflictions. Perhaps at the outset of your spiritual life, after your conversion or when first you were admitted into the Priesthood, or entered a Religious Order, you were apparently the object of God's particular favor, you were privileged to enjoy His special loving-kindness. How fervent you then were in prayer, how zealous in the service of God! Now all is changed. Do not let this disquiet you. God does not love you less because you are more frequently assailed by temptation, more visited by tribulations than you were formerly. "My brethren, count it all joy when you shall

fall into divers temptations," so says St. James. (i. 2.) We read of a hermit who when delivered from a temptation that had long tormented him, seemed quite sorrowful, and addressed to God this loving complaint: "Thou dost not deem me worthy, O Lord, to suffer something for love of Thee." Wherefore, my soul, consider it to be a signal mark of God's love and favor when He takes you with Him on to Olivet.

3d. Consider that you must remain upon Mount Olivet with the three apostles: that is, withstand the assaults, the temptations of the evil one; bear the trials and troubles of life as St. Peter, with steadfast faith, and confidence that is firm as a rock. However high the waves of the stormy ocean of temptation rise, as long as you do not lose confidence you will not sink. Armed with this faith show yourself to be like James, whose name signifies "champion." As long as you maintain the fight, as long as you struggle with your foe, he will not prevail against you. The victory will be yours when your opponent lays down his arms, and gives up the contest. Remember that, my soul. This thought will be a great support to you: As long as I fight, as long as I resist temptation, I shall not be defeated. Yet one thing more: you must fight like John, the meaning of whose name is the gift or grace of God. Do not trust to your own power and strength, or you will fall as did Peter. But if you fight in and with the grace of God you will be invincible; and while the self-confident Peter has to weep bitter tears over his unhappy fall, you will be able to follow our Lord with the humble-minded John from Olivet to Calvary.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

To-day, when the Church with the utmost solemnity calls upon the faithful to do penance, and reminds them that they are naught else but dust and ashes, meditate attentively on our Lord's agony in the Garden of Olives, in

order more deeply to engrave this impression on your heart, and imbue you with a more fervent determination to do penance. Imagine that you behold your Saviour kneeling there in indescribable anguish of soul. His head is bowed down to the ground; the ashy hues of death overspread His countenance; His arms hang nerveless by His side; His heart palpitates feebly; the groans that rend His breast are those of one in the very arms of death. What is it that causes Him such awful anguish, what is the load that oppresses Him with this terrible weight?

1st. Consider that our Lord now goes to judgment. That God of whom Isaias says: "I will visit the evils of the world, and against the wicked for their iniquity. For this I will trouble the heaven: and the earth shall be moved out of her place for the indignation of the Lord of Hosts." (Is. xiii. 11, 13.) Consider that God is now present to the sight of Jesus, who appears before Him laden with our sins, burdened with the guilt of our transgressions. It is no longer His heavenly Father before whom He stands, but His stern Judge. Hence it is, my soul, that we see Jesus overwhelmed by fear and dread. For your sake Jesus trembles in presence of the Judge, and you, O Christian, heed so little, feel so little apprehension concerning the terrible judgments of the just God. If the Son of God is overcome with dread of this tribunal, if He feels such fear as was never felt before, how can you, who are dust and ashes, sin so heedlessly, just as if there were no judgment to come?

2d. Consider that our Lord feels the burden of sin. He is not only man, He is God also, the God of infinite holiness. As such nothing is more odious, more hateful to Him than sin. And now He is compelled to take upon Himself what is most abhorrent, most intolerable to Him, sin, and not one sin alone, but the sins of the whole world. Only think, my soul, of the awful ocean of guilt that began with the prevarication of Adam and goes down to the last human being that shall be born into the world; all this weight of sin rests upon the God made man. On Him, the Holiest of the holy, rests Cain's horrible fratri-

cide; on Him rests the sins for the sake of which the world was destroyed by the deluge and Sodom consumed by fire from heaven. O frightful burden, in itself sufficient to weigh the Son of God to the dust! But this is not enough, the flood of iniquity rolls on afresh; on Him the transgressions of the people of Israel during the thousand years' wandering in the desert, the abominable practices of the idolatrous heathen, the evil deeds of ungrateful Christians, all this is laid on Him to whom even the slightest sin is utterly abhorrent. Imagine yourself, my soul, chained to a corpse, condemned to remain fettered to it until it was completely decomposed, what intolerable misery that would be. Now behold, it was far more terrible for Jesus, the Holy One, to take upon Himself the guilt and iniquities of the world. Yet alas! how little concern people feel about their sins; they seem to revel in them, like swine in the mire!

3d. Consider furthermore that our Lord looks into the future; He sees in anticipation His whole Passion, all the suffering that awaits Him. He sees Judas' treachery, which cuts Him to the heart more sharply than the keenest blade. He feels beforehand the rough usage, the maltreatment He is to receive from the coarse soldiers, the crown of thorns, the cross erected on Calvary. He who gave His life for us all, He who of His divine nature is immortal, feels and views in anticipation the pangs of dissolution, the cruel, ignominious death which fills Him with such horror that in His agony He exclaims: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (St. Matt. xxvi. 38.) Then His strength forsakes Him and He falls prostrate on the ground. Oh look upon your Saviour, engrave upon your mind this pitiful sight, but at the same time remember you have not yet taken into consideration that which gave its greatest poignancy to our Lord's agony in the Garden of Olives. Recollect that at the moment when in His grief and sorrow the climax of His agony was reached, His omniscient eye, gazing sadly on into the far future, beheld thousands to whom He would one day be forced to address this reproach: "Where is thy soul, for

which I endured such unspeakable anguish? where is thy soul, for which I sweat great drops of blood? Alas! it is lost, it is unsaved by My earnest prayers; My sweat of agony has been for thee not a blessing but a curse; for thee My tears of blood on Olivet were shed in vain!" At the sight of such black ingratitude a shudder passes through the soul of Jesus; His delicate physical organization is convulsed with such anguish at the mournful vista which the future presents that the warm blood from His heart is forced out of every pore of the finely-strung body and falls in drops to the earth. As St. Bernard remarks: Not His eyes alone shed tears of blood and water for our sins, His whole body wept. In view of all you have seen to-day, my soul, strew ashes on your head and delay no longer to do penance.

THURSDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE EXHORTATION TO PRAY THAT OUR LORD GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

The fear and sadness experienced by our Lord during His agony became so overwhelming that He could no longer bear it alone. He looked around for help and for relief, and returned to His apostles to obtain it. But He finds them also oppressed by a similar sadness—how can they afford Him succor and solace? Can the blind lead the blind? Thus He stands there, the suffering Saviour, abandoned and alone, destitute of all help, of all comfort. Picture Him to yourself, my soul, at this moment, and then see to what means He resorts to obtain deliverance. "Pray" He says to His disciples. We see then that He enjoins on them to have recourse to prayer. Why does He do this?

1st. Consider that prayer is the best consolation. This is the lesson Jesus would teach us on the Mount of Olives. When we need real consolation, when all earthly assistance fails us, when there is no one to support or

raise us up, there yet remains for us one, and that a sure means of consolation, of assistance, of deliverance, and that is prayer. How often you have by your own experience proved this to be true, how often have you seen it exemplified in the life of the saints! And yet if agony such as our Lord endured in the Garden of Olives overwhelms you, if sorrow and heaviness oppress you, you seek help first from the world; you endeavor to find consolation in idle conversation, solace in empty amusements; you look for help—and of course look in vain—from man; last of all, when perhaps it is too late, it occurs to you to have recourse to prayer. Learn from our Lord's example to turn at once for consolation to the source whence it is most readily obtained, and that is in prayer.

2d. Consider that our Lord does not exhort His disciples to pray that they may be exempted from the assaults of temptation, but that they may not enter into temptation, i.e., succumb to it. (St. Matt. xxvi. 41.) For temptations and afflictions are often more beneficial than prejudicial, particularly if they come from God. They keep us vigilant, they make us humble, they increase our merit and purify our souls as fire refines gold. For this reason do not beseech Almighty God to spare you all conflicts and trials, for that would be the same as if a soldier were to hope that he might never meet with an opportunity to use his weapons, to test his mettle; but rather pray that when sufferings and afflictions overtake you, you may not fall beneath them. Above all pray most earnestly when the season of trial has actually come. The cause of your falling so often in temptation is because you are ready enough to use your arms before the day of battle comes, but then when they are really needed, you let your hands drop by your side in faint-hearted despondency. What folly it would be to take up your arms and put yourself on the defensive before ever any sign of the enemy could be descried in the distance, and then, when the foe is really at your doors, to make no use of them. Yet this is what you do; in seasons of tranquillity and peace you will perhaps pray long and fervently that you

may not have to engage in battle; but why when prayer is most needed, in seasons of warfare and unrest, do you not pray with equal fervor, equal persistence that you may be enabled to stand in the day of battle?

3d. Consider that our Lord enjoins vigilance upon His apostles at the same time that He exhorts them to pray. "Watch with Me," He says, "and pray." Be watchful at prayer, not drowsy and faint-hearted. Remember, my soul, how wondrous is the power of prayer. The prayer of Elias called down rain from heaven, the prayer of Eliseus raised the dead to life, the prayer of the penitent thief saved him from hell. But if prayer is to have power it must be mighty in itself, full of fire, full of life; you must watch in prayer; be vigilant and alert, not like one half asleep, who mutters he knows not what. Has your prayer hitherto been such as this? Learn to-day, my soul, to pray at the right time, to pray for the right things, to pray in the right manner, and thus follow the injunction Jesus Christ gave to His disciples better than they did: "Watch ye and pray."

FRIDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE DISCIPLES WHO SLEPT WHEN IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

Represent to yourself to-day the three disciples whom our Lord took with Him to the Garden of Olives. While the Redeemer prayed and wrestled in His awful agony, they fell asleep, overcome with weariness, grief and distress. They slept while He watched; they slumbered quietly while He, desolate and alone, engaged in an appalling conflict; they slumbered, while Satan like a roaring lion went about them, and every moment the dangers impending over them and over their Master grew more menacing, more imminent. And when Jesus presently came to them, partly as one who, being sorely distressed, is driven to seek companionship and sympathy by the

horror that oppresses him, partly as a faithful shepherd, who although himself agitated to the utmost degree, still keeps watch over his flock when it is in peril: when the Saviour, thus coming to them, found them asleep, in the loneliness of His soul He cried in anguish: "What! could you not watch one hour with Me?" (St. Matt. xxvi. 40.) Keep this sad scene before your mind whilst you meditate on this subject.

1st. The friends of Jesus sleep; His enemies watch. Judas, who betrayed Him, watches; the Pharisees and chief priests, who assembled to judge and condemn Him, watch; the soldiers approaching to apprehend Him also watch, but the apostles are asleep; even the impulsive, warm-hearted Peter, who vowed that he would die with his Master, is no exception. So it ever has been. The enemies of our Lord and of His Church are always more vigilant, more energetic, more active than His friends. Yes, my soul, you cannot deny that you too deserve to hear that sorrowful exclamation from Jesus' lips: "What! could you not watch one hour with Me?" Alas! how unwatchful you are over your senses, over the souls entrusted to your care, over the Community you govern. And while you sleep, Judas, far more vigilant than you are, is drawing near; the myrmidons of the devil are drawing near; they will take our Lord, they will take His grace away from your own soul, from your Community, from your flock. Listen to-day to His voice; let it rouse you from your slumber.

2d. Consider how watchful the three disciples who slept during Christ's agony became at a subsequent period. John, awakened by Jesus, did not again close his eyes in sleep until his Master was laid in the grave. Peter, awakened by Jesus, became later on the bishop, or guardian, the supreme ruler over the whole Church. Finally James, who also slept in the Garden of Olives, distinguished himself as a vigilant and faithful apostle, and was the first to shed his blood for his divine Master. On Mount Olivet we see the disciples still in an imperfect stage. This is the distinction between those who are per-

fect and those who are imperfect; the latter, when tribulations come upon them, and kicks are their portion, are pusillanimous and downcast, they become careless in their devotional practices, they allow themselves to slumber; whereas the former are only rendered all the more vigilant and zealous. A slight puff of wind will extinguish the feeble flame of a taper, while it fans the flame of a conflagration, and the stronger the blast the more furiously the fire will burn. If you are weak and imperfect the first breath of affliction will suffice to quench the little spark of the love of God; but if you are strong and advanced in sanctity, then that flame will mount up the higher when exposed to the blast of tribulation. In the furnace of temptation and suffering the just will be melted like wax and humble themselves, whereas sinners will only be hardened like clay under the action of heat. Temptation, as St. Augustine says, is a furnace that refines gold and consumes straw. If therefore, my soul, you desire to know what is your spiritual condition, scrutinize your conduct on the mount of suffering and temptation, for as we read in the *Imitation* (i. 13): "We often know not what we can do; but temptation discovers what we are."

3d. Consider what our Lord said to the apostles when He came to them for the third time: "Sleep ye now and take your rest." (St. Matt. xxvi. 45.) Hence we see there comes a time when our Lord no longer says to us "Watch," but bids us sleep. Observe, however, that our Lord does not say this unto the apostles until the executioners are approaching to lead Him away and put Him to death. Not until the end of life draws near does the time come for us to take our rest, and our rest will then be the sweeter the greater has been our previous watchfulness, our previous labor. But if we think to rest now and sleep, this solemn question may well be asked of us: "If thou seekest rest in this life, how wilt thou then come to the rest eternal?" (*Imit. B. iii. ch. 35.*) Note that the Lord will in that case not say to you: "Could you not watch one hour with Me?" Could you not watch during the

brief period of this earthly existence, which is but as an hour in comparison with eternity; He will on the contrary say to you: Now you shall watch everlasting, for all eternity you shall find no rest because of the tormenting demons and the gnawing worm of conscience. No, my soul, let not that fate be yours; let us rather obey our Lord's first injunction in time, in order that in eternity we may hear Him address to us the other exhortation: "Sleep ye now, and take your rest."

SATURDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

ON THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN.

Imagine that you behold your Saviour in prayer on the Mount of Olives. His sacred countenance wears the ashy hues of death, the cold sweat of agony bedews His brow, His hands are convulsively clasped together, His eyes are raised in earnest, painfully earnest entreaty to Heaven, and His pale lips move in fervent supplication. Meditate upon the prayer He utters.

1st. Consider that it is in the most complete abandonment that our Lord prays. It is night, dark night. Jesus is quite alone; His disciples are asleep, His loving Mother is not there, and His heavenly Father, the last refuge of the desolate Saviour, turns a deaf ear to His petition. Nay more, the divine nature of our Lord, which till then had been His unfailing support, now withdraws itself to such an extent that His human soul, thrown in upon itself, is immersed in an ocean of sorrow, anguish and dismay. Now in this state of supreme desolation, of complete dereliction He has recourse to prayer. Learn hence, my soul, what it behooves you to do in seasons, in hours of utter loneliness, of aridity; when you are in that condition of utmost misery when one is deserted by man and apparently forsaken by God. You must pray, continue to pray, even under such circumstances of difficulty as those of our Lord on Mount Olivet. A prayer of this na-

ture is well pleasing to God, oftentimes more acceptable to His ear than a *Te Deum* of thanksgiving in your happier days. He listens with satisfaction if amid your direst distress and desolation you pray in the words of the Imitation: "Father, always to be honored, the hour is come that Thy servant should be outwardly oppressed. O Lord, I am not worthy of Thy consolation and therefore justly dost Thou deal with me when Thou leavest me poor and wretched." Be assured, my soul, that a prayer such as this is carried up on high by the angels of God in their golden censers.

2d. Consider that our Lord prays perseveringly and patiently. Already He has twice besought His heavenly Father, besought Him more fervently, more earnestly than any man upon earth ever did. Yet His Father does not listen to His petition. Jesus does not grow faint; He perseveres in His supplication, praying a third time; and when again His prayer is not heard, He does not murmur, He does not regret the prayers which have proved useless; no, He calmly and resignedly adds: "Not My will, but Thine be done." (St. Luke xxii. 42.) What a useful lesson you may here learn from our Lord's example. If He, God's beloved Son, must ask three times for the fulfilment of His prayer, and does so without a trace of annoyance or impatience, why are you so despondent if your prayers are not immediately granted, why are you so wanting in patience and steadfastness? Can it be expected that God should hear you, a sinner, rather than His own only-begotten Son? Wherefore pray more fervently, more perseveringly than heretofore, and you will soon have less reason to complain that your petitions are unheeded.

3d. Consider that our Lord's prayer is not granted by His heavenly Father. O great and wondrous mystery! Never did a prayer so perfect, so powerful ascend to Heaven; never was it uttered by the lips of one dearer and more precious to the heart of the Most High, and that prayer is the very one God does not grant. What is the reason of this? Because otherwise you, O sinner, would have been lost. How incomprehensible is the love

of God! For the sake of a miserable sinner He will not hear the petition of His own Son; for the sake of a guilty criminal He turns a deaf ear to the pathetic entreaties of the most holy of the dwellers upon earth. With such a proof of charity before your eyes, can you any longer doubt that God, who for your sake would not grant our Lord's prayer, has your greater good in view when He, as is sometimes the case, refuses to listen to your supplication? From this day forth cease to complain when this happens; nay, rather do more, imitate your dear Lord, and sometimes —on Thursdays, for instance, when we recall the agony in the garden—give up of your own free will the fulfilment of some desire which you have much at heart for the conversion of sinners or for the souls in purgatory.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE UTILITY OF FASTING.

To-day, my soul, contemplate in imagination the picture portrayed to view in to-day's Gospel, which opens with the words: "When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry." (St. Matt. iv. 2.) What an instance of self-denial! How long a time to abstain from taking any nourishment, to live without food or drink! What a signal conquest over the strongest craving of human nature! Now contemplate the emaciated, the wasted form of your Redeemer; see how He, of whom the Psalmist says: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season" (Ps. cxliv. 15), Himself now feels the pangs of hunger. Most assuredly our Lord had some design in enduring this extraordinarily severe fast. He intended to encourage us to fast in like manner, for this mortification of the body is most profitable, as the Fathers of the Church concur in asserting.

1st. Consider that fasting is the most powerful weapon whereby to resist the devil. The first Adam ate and was

conquered; the second Adam fasted and conquered. Fasting, St. Basil says, provides man with a weapon whereby he may vanquish all the hosts of hell. Fasting, St. Jerome tells us, is a truly glorious thing; it is glorious for man, since it cleanses him from sin and renders him acceptable to God and to the angels, and it is terrible for the devils, because it smites them as with a keen, sharp-edged sword and confounds both them and all their devices. The might which fasting imparts, St. Athanasius declares, is one which all the demons dread. Wherefore if, according to the unanimous testimony of the Fathers, fasting is a weapon of such great potency against the enemies of our salvation, gird on with joy, my soul, at once, at the very outset of the ecclesiastical fast this excellent means of defence, and be assured that the more valiantly you employ it during the solemn season of Lent, the more certainly will you have cause to rejoice in the happy Easter-tide in the victory you have gained over the devil.

2d. Consider that fasting is nourishment for the soul. Just as material food is necessary for the growth and development of the body—to quote St. Chrysostom's words—so fasting makes the soul stout and strong, and gives her wings wherewith she may soar aloft and contemplate divine mysteries. Fasting, St. Athanasius tells us, is the refreshment of the soul, nourishment to the heart, a salutary medicine and the source of chastity. Prove the truth of this from your own experience, my soul; when have you the happiest inspirations, when are your meditations most profitable and your devotional exercises most sweet to you, when can you raise your thoughts with greater facility and dwell on the joys of Heaven with more rapture; at the time when you have eaten a full meal, or when you are fasting and your body is no hindrance to you? You have given your body food, abundance of food, long enough already; now the time has come for your soul to receive the nourishment she needs.

3d. Consider what an attraction fasting gives us in the eyes of the angels. We read that after our Lord had fasted forty days, “Angels came and ministered to Him.”

(St. Matt. iv. 11.) This is no wonder, for fasting is an angelic food, and those who fast are counted among the angels. St. Basil says that the angels go about in the churches, and write in their books the names of those who fast; and this doubtless they do because they consider such persons to be more worthy of their celestial company and they defend them mightily in all dangers—temporal and spiritual. St. Basil even goes so far as to say that Almighty God calls together all the denizens of the heavenly courts that they may look upon those Christians who fast. Why indeed, since the fallen angels took a malicious pleasure in seeing Adam eat, should not the good angels take delight in seeing the sons of Adam fast? Wherefore, my soul, fast in such a manner as to cause annoyance to the devil, to give refreshment to your soul and joy to your holy angel; and thus you will obediently follow the teaching of the Fathers and of the Gospel for to-day.

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD'S AGONY ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Fix your attention, my soul, on the affecting and most impressive spectacle afforded by the Saviour of mankind “sorrowful unto death” in His agony in the Garden of Olives. Words cannot describe the horror that invaded His soul, the fear and apprehension of death, the shrinking of His human nature, when His approaching Passion in all its magnitude presents itself to His mental vision in a series of appalling images. Only contemplate Him in His agony of death; see how He falls prostrate in the dust; a cold sweat breaks out over Him, He trembles, His whole frame is convulsed with anguish. His sacred countenance is scarcely to be recognized; His lips are colorless, His hair stands on end. Can we wonder at this?

1st. He wrestles in the agony of death. St. Luke says: “Being in an agony He prayed the longer.” (St. Luke

xxii. 43.) This agony was not caused by an ordinary fear of death; it was a conflict voluntarily entered upon to atone for our spiritual death. In that sad hour the flesh and the spirit strove together in the breast of the anguish-stricken Saviour. The flesh shrank in natural terror at the near approach of death, of a death moreover of a peculiarly painful and ignominious nature, while on the other hand the spirit consented to that death for our redemption. Now this conflict was rendered all the harder, so hard in fact that death itself could not be worse, because in the person of our Lord, soul and body, flesh and spirit, which had to be separated, were joined together by a strong bond of charity. For if the union of body and soul is so close and intimate even in us sinful mortals, although sin is always interposing to disturb that union and our whole life is an incessant warfare between the two, how peaceful and perfect must have been their junction in the person of the sinless Jesus! Hence it was that so hard and severe a contest ensued, in which, as of necessity, the soul gained the victory.

O my soul, it is to atone for all the defeats you have suffered when you allowed your flesh to triumph over the spirit, that Jesus enters on this struggle and gains a hard-won victory: if you would fain have your final struggle with the king of terrors rendered less difficult, see that in your daily contests between spirit and flesh the former is always triumphant.

2d. Consider that our Lord's death-agony was a conflict between the natural fear and dread of the terrible suffering, the cruel death awaiting Him, and His zeal for God's glory and man's salvation. Zeal for the glory of His heavenly Father, who had been so grievously offended by sin, urged Jesus to endure His Passion, and charity towards mankind inspired Him to undergo death for the ransom of the human race. On the other hand the natural fear of death made itself very strongly felt. The price to be paid for our redemption was too great; it must be purchased at the cost of His delicate, virginal body, His precious blood, His sinless life. To this was added the certitude that this high

price would be paid in vain for thousands, so that hence a pitiful struggle arose in His soul as He debated with Himself whether after all it was really worth while to endure so many, such bitter things for miserable mortals, until at length zeal for God's glory triumphed over the fear of death. Learn from this, my soul, to suffer a thousand deaths rather than lose the salvation purchased at so immense a cost, and to yield up your life willingly when the glory of God is at stake.

3d. Consider finally, how terrible our Lord's agony must have been merely from a natural standpoint. For if we see mortal men wrestling with death in so dreadful a manner, although dissolution is a law of their nature, and they are generally reduced to a state of extreme debility or are perhaps half unconscious, we may judge how awful must have been the struggle between life and death in the case of One who was in the full force of His virile strength; who entered upon the contest in complete consciousness; who being sinless, naturally revolted all the more against death, the "wages of sin," and who was besides immortal in His divine nature. For your sake, my soul, our Lord endured this agony, in order to alleviate your death-struggle. But woe betide you if you are defeated in the strife between spirit and flesh, between your desire for God's glory and your reluctance to suffer for it, for then your last agony will be all the more terrible because you will be tortured by the consciousness that you have made our Lord's agony useless in your regard. Wherefore form the resolution to-day, and renew it every Thursday, when we commemorate our Lord's agony in the garden, to prefer to fight now in order that in the hour of death you may not have to struggle so hard, to sustain so painful a contest.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD'S SWEAT OF BLOOD.

Let your meditation to-day be made in a peculiarly solemn and serious spirit. Imprint deeply upon your mind the image of the Saviour covered with a sweat of blood; let it awaken in you sincere contrition and profound compassion. So terrible, so awful was the anguish of soul, the deadly strife of that hour of agony, that Jesus in His distress at one time lifted up His voice in a pathetic cry; His hands were wrung and clasped tightly together; great drops of blood trickled down His pallid countenance. Can you look unmoved on your Saviour in this condition, as He stands there trembling and amazed, covered with blood, overwhelmed with horror? Now proceed to consider the threefold cause of the sweat of blood that exuded from His agonized frame.

1st. It was the dread of death which forced the sweat of blood out of His sacred body. We read that in days of yore King Ezechias, on being told by the prophet: "Give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die, and not live" (IV. Kings xx. 1), he turned his face, blanched with horror, to the wall, and "wept with much weeping," although he knew that he should end his days in the royal palace, surrounded by his courtiers, who would afford him solace and render death less difficult and terrible to him. Judge then how much, how incomparably greater must have been the anguish and dread the Son of God experienced, when He heard in anticipation the sentence of death, and knew that it would be executed on the cruel cross; that He would expire between two thieves, in the place where criminals were put to death. Added to this was the consciousness that He would not be able, like King Ezechias, to meet death in regal dignity and honor, but would be condemned to die a death of obloquy, regarded as **one of the worst of evil-doers, despised, abandoned by**

every one; nay even to be spit upon, and see a robber and murderer preferred to Him. Seeing this you will no longer wonder that our Lord's human nature was so horrified at the prospect of such a death, that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.

2d. Consider that it was sin in the second place that forced the blood out of our Lord's sacred body. What an immense weight must be heaped upon a man to make the blood start from his finger-nails! Now the blood does not merely exude from His nails, but from every part of His sacred body. What then, let us ask, is the weight that presses thus sorely upon Him? St. Bernard tells us; he supposes our Lord to exclaim under the stress of agony: "The wounds caused by thy sins, O man, are far more painful to Me than the wounds inflicted upon My body; My physical sufferings are by no means as hard to bear as the heavy burden of thy transgressions, which thou dost lay upon Me." Alas! it is not only a cruel sweat that is forced out of the pores of the Saviour, agonized and groaning beneath this load, but great drops of blood. And have you, my soul, no tears to shed, no tears of compunction at the sight of His distress? Do you not hear the words that St. Bernard ascribes to the Saviour: "Stop, O sinner; cease to heap so great a burden on thy Redeemer, causing Him to sweat blood, otherwise thou wilt thyself be crushed under the weight, and sink into the abyss of hell."

3d. Consider that it was charity in the third place that forced the sweat of blood out of our Lord's sacred body. Behold how great was our Lord's charity to us sinners, how forcible His holy desire to suffer for the glory of God and man's salvation; He could not wait until His divine countenance was buffeted, His delicate body torn with rods and scourges, His sacred head pierced with thorns, His hands and feet transfixated with nails, His loving heart opened with a lance, thus affording manifold means of egress to His precious blood. No, the intense ardor of that charity already drives that precious blood forth from every pore of His sacred body, causing the stream of charity, the

source of man's salvation and reconciliation with God to flow upon Olivet, before Mount Calvary is reached. Think upon the threefold origin of that sweat of blood as often as you recite that decade of the Rosary which recalls the sorrowful mystery of our Lord's agony in the garden, and renew the resolution which to-day's meditation suggests to you.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE KISS OF JUDAS.

Imagine yourself, my soul, a witness of that lamentable and terrible spectacle when Judas kissed our Lord. The unhappy apostle comes, accompanied by rough soldiers and brutal executioners; he goes up to Jesus, his Lord and Master, at whose table he has sat for three years, with whom he has enjoyed delightful intercourse, who has admitted him to His closest confidence, who has given him to eat of His own flesh and blood; he goes up to Him, his Benefactor, to accomplish the foul treachery he has planned, and on Jesus' pale and bloodstained countenance he imprints the traitor's kiss. What base, what horrible perfidy!

1st. Consider that when, in times long past, Joab, the general of David's forces, perpetrated a most shameful deed, inasmuch as, going to meet Amasa, who was also a commander in the army, and stooping forward to kiss him, he at the same moment thrust his sword into his side and killed him; Solomon, David's wise and peaceful son, was so horrified at the crime that he avenged it upon Joab in a signal manner. But what was Joab's deed in comparison to that whereof Judas was guilty? Joab with his treacherous kiss murdered his fellow man, his equal, whereas Judas by his kiss murdered his Lord and his God. Joab killed Amasa with a single blow, but think to what a lingering, torturing, extraordinarily painful death the

kiss of Judas betrayed our Lord! Oh the execrable cruelty, the infamy of that treacherous act!

2d. Consider that when the assassins of Julius Cæsar fell upon him in the Senate-house with daggers drawn to stab him, the hero of many battles stood immovable, displaying no emotion, uttering not a word of complaint. But when Brutus, whom he loved with the affection of a father, also approached and drew the murderous weapon to strike his benefactor, this blow hurt Cæsar more than all the others, and he could not refrain from uttering the sorrowful exclamation: "Thou too, Brutus, my son!" Now if the ingratitude of Brutus grieved Cæsar so deeply, how sorely must the loving heart of Jesus been pained and saddened by the ingratitude of His apostle! Might He not have addressed to him this plaintive reproach: "Is this what I have deserved of thee, I who knelt on the ground before thee to wash thy feet; is this what I have deserved of thee, I who fed thee with My body and blood; is this what I have deserved, I who chose thee to be an apostle and endowed thee with supernatural powers?" O thankless Judas! Thou art more criminal than Cain; he slew his brother, but thou hast slain thy Father, thy Creator, thy Redeemer. Truly indeed it had been better for thee hadst thou never been born. And yet, my soul, you who are so horrified at the kiss of Judas, ask yourself this question:

3d. What kiss do you give our Lord? Several persons kissed the Saviour when He was on earth. The Blessed Virgin Mary covered the lovely countenance of the Infant Jesus with her maternal kisses. Magdalen imprinted the kiss of contrite sorrow on His sacred feet; the aged Simeon was privileged before his departure to kiss the divine Child in the temple at Jerusalem, and now we see the wretched Judas daring to give Him a traitor's kiss. Reflect on this, my soul; ask yourself whether you have not, by an unworthy Communion or some mortal sin, given the kiss of Judas to your Lord, or whether by a true and sincere confession you have, with heartfelt compunction, bestowed on Him the kiss of Magdalen. Ask yourself

whether in Holy Communion you have pressed Him to your heart with adoring love like Mary, whether you can hope when death is near to give and receive from Him the kiss of peace as Simeon did, and thus depart out of this life in *osculo Domini*.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE POWER OF THE WORDS OUR LORD SPOKE: “I AM HE.”

As on a gloomy day a gleam of sunshine may often be seen to break through the heavy clouds, so in the midst of our Lord's sufferings, in the hour of His deepest abasement, His divine nature, His divine majesty and power occasionally made itself manifest. Thus it was on the Mount of Olives. Prostrated by intense mental and physical pain, exhausted to death, behold Him standing in the presence of a goodly band of armed men, and see how at the simple words: “I am He” (St. John xviii. 5), those stalwart soldiers fall to the ground. There they lie prone, feeble and impotent at the feet of the Individual they have been sent to apprehend. Represent to yourself this bright spot which you come upon so unexpectedly in the sombre picture of our Lord's Passion.

1st. Consider these words of St. Augustine: If Christ acted thus when He allowed Himself to be judged by the ungodly, what will He do when He is Himself the judge of the whole world? If He displays His infinite power when He is about to submit to the penalty of death, how astounding will be the might He reveals when He appears as the sovereign Ruler of Heaven and earth? Think, my soul, if those gentle words from our Lord's lips: “I am He,” terrified His enemies to such an extent that they fell to the earth, although the words were spoken for their benefit, imagine the horror that will overwhelm them when one day they hear His voice, the voice of their

Judge pronouncing the sentence of their condemnation. St. Jerome asserts that when our Lord said to the executioners: "I am He," a gleam of such fiery brightness flashed out of His eyes that they fell to earth as if struck by lightning. What then, think you, will be the effect produced by those flashes of fire, when on the judgment day our Lord's countenance is lit up with holy wrath, when His eye falls upon the ungodly, striking them as with a fiery bolt, when His voice sounds on their ears like the rolling thunder? In anticipation of the judgment to come, my soul, cast yourself down upon your face now, but do not let this be done by compulsion, as in the case of the servants on the Mount of Olives, but voluntarily, as a sign of sincere contrition and of repentance for your sins; for now Jesus speaks to you with the utmost mildness, saying: "I am He, I am He who has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

2d. In order that you may experience less difficulty in responding to the call of grace, consider the effect these words: "I am He," will produce upon the ungodly on the day of judgment. Picture to yourself the Saviour in that terrible moment when He turns His countenance kindled with just anger, His eyes flashing fire, the eyes of an angry Judge upon His enemies on the left hand, as if He would annihilate them with a glance; think with what unutterable terror—terror far greater than that which seized upon the soldiers in the Garden of Olives—they will hear the words: "I am He. I am He, your almighty Judge; I am He, the God of vengeance; I have come to judge you, to condemn you to eternal perdition. I am He who fills heaven and earth, aye, and hell too with the sound of My voice, to summon angels, men and devils to appear before My tribunal. I am He who will launch at you these awful words to your everlasting woe: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (St. Matt. xxv. 41.) Alas, my soul, how unhappy is the fate of the ungodly; those who in their lifetime have, like the soldiers and servants of the chief priests, bound our Lord, scourged, mocked, and

crucified Him, will, struck by these terrible words: “I am He,” fall headlong, not to the ground only, but into the abyss of hell!

3d. Consider the effect these same words will have for the just. We read in the Gospel that once when the disciples one dark and stormy night were tossing in a boat in the midst of the sea they were alarmed by seeing a figure which they thought to be an apparition walking upon the waves; it was Jesus, who spoke to them, saying: “It is I, fear ye not.” (St. Matt. xiv. 27.) Thus, my soul, the just will also be filled with apprehension when, on the last day, they see the Judge of the living and the dead coming on the clouds of heaven; but oh how soon they will be tranquillized by hearing that word of omnipotence: “I am He, fear ye not!” I am He, your God and your Father, for whom you have struggled, suffered and striven; I am He who recompenses every cup of water which you have given to your brother man; I am He with whom you shall be to-day in the kingdom of My Father. O words of amazing solace! Would you not, my soul, hear them addressed to you? Ask yourself this day which meaning they would have for you, if you were this very hour called to appear before the judgment seat of God, and according to the answer of your conscience form your resolutions.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE CUTTING OFF OF MALCHUS' EAR.

It was of no avail that our Lord's infatuated enemies had fallen to the ground at the sound of His words. They rose up again, and in the hardness of their hearts laid their sacrilegious hands on His sacred person, to arrest Him. Now endeavor to realize the spectacle presented at the moment when Jesus, meek as a lamb led to the slaughter, allows Himself to be bound, and Peter, inflamed with zeal at the sight of the danger in which his Master is placed, eager to give practical proof of the truth of his

determination: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and to death" (St. Luke xxii. 33) draws his sword and, "striking the servant of the high priest, cut off his ear." Much as the apostle's bravery on the one hand deserves commendation, on the other hand it must be admitted that he allowed his zeal to carry him too far.

1st. Consider that he, singlehanded, opposes the whole multitude of soldiers and servants; with the intention of attacking them he draws his sword. Now observe that this bold apostle assuredly did not purpose only to cut off Malchus' ear; his stroke was aimed at the man's head. Had he struck home, as he intended, and killed Malchus on the spot, what would have happened? Would not the enemies of our Lord, infuriated at this attack and desirous of revenge, have drawn their swords immediately, and in a hand-to-hand fight probably have killed both Jesus and His apostles? Think of what unspeakable graces, of what all-important and priceless mysteries the world would have been deprived through the untimely death of our Lord and of the apostles, through the intemperate zeal Peter displayed. Learn hence, my soul, and lay to heart the maxim: Discretion is the better part of valor; learn to bridle your impulses and not to act precipitately, although you may mean well. How often our Lord has been obliged, as in the case of Malchus, to make good the harm which the rash zeal of His followers has effected. Take heed that you show your zeal at the opportune time. Peter would have done well to display ardor for his Master's cause in the court of the high priest, but he failed to do so when he ought; and you, my soul, often act in a similar manner.

2d. Consider that Malchus' right ear, which was cut off, represents in its mystic signification the Jewish nation, who would not with their right ear harken to the heavenly doctrines the Son of God proclaimed; they would not harken when He exhorted them to be converted and do penance; they only seemed to have the power of hearing with their left ear, and with that they listened to the precepts of men, the whispers of the devil,

the suggestions of their blind hatred towards our Lord. On that account, because their right ear was deaf to His teaching, the Lord permitted it to be cut off by Peter's sword. This was for a warning to you, my soul. For if you do not lend your right ear to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, to the promptings of your conscience, if in your case that ear is deaf to what is good, the sword of the divine judgments will strike you; you will be entirely deprived of that ear; I mean you will be deprived of grace, you will lose the wish to hear what is conducive to your salvation.

3d. Consider who those persons are who, like Malchus, have only one ear. It is all that class of persons and pre-eminently those Priests and Religious, who prefer to listen to slander and detraction, to idle, useless chatter or the news of the day; who would rather spend their time on frivolous tales and falsehoods than hear the Word of God, who speaks to them in their spiritual reading, in their meditation, in sermons. Those are companions and friends of Malchus who cannot without envy hear of their brother's good fortune or listen to his praise, who feel a malicious pleasure in learning of any misfortune or disgrace that may have befallen him. Those are the brethren of Malchus who are wilfully deaf to the commands of their Superior, but who listen eagerly to the promptings of self-will. Now if you, my soul, have hitherto been one of Malchus' amiable brethren, turn to-day, I beseech you, to the Lord with sincere contrition; entreat Him to heal and give back to you your right ear which you have lost.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE ARREST OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN.

Picture to yourself the gloomy, dismal scene when our Lord was apprehended; it is one on which no man can look without compassion. By the lurid glare of torches the nocturnal procession moves away; the soldiers go first,

then come the executioners, dragging Jesus along with ropes, then the mocking Pharisees, and last of all the servants of the high priest bringing up the rear. That was indeed a melancholy journey! The terrified disciples in grief and consternation have fled, hardly knowing what they do; only Peter and John follow their Master afar off.

1st. Consider our Lord's helplessness and patience. Fancy a gentle pure white lamb in the midst of hungry wolves, and there you will have an image of Jesus taken captive by the Jews. The barbarous executioners handle the Lamb of God roughly, they maltreat Him cruelly, they exercise their ingenuity in tormenting Him. They conduct Him along rough, unfrequented paths, where the stones hurt and bruise His bare and bleeding feet, driving Him onward with coarse oaths and hideous mocking laughter. Jesus is defenceless, completely in the power of these ravening wolves; He can only endure in silence. What is your conduct under similar circumstances?

2d. Consider our Lord's humility and charity. He, the God of infinite greatness and majesty, allows Himself to be arrested, bound, and led away captive by the very men who but a few moments before He had overthrown and cast to the ground by a single word from His lips. He, the infinitely Holy One, who could say to His ferocious adversaries: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" (St. John viii. 46) allows Himself to be taken prisoner like a common highwayman by the officers of the law and the executioners, and endures their contempt and derision without rebuke or retort. What inconceivable humility and charity! Yes, charity, my soul; for it is charity that bound Him—the jailers were impotent to do so; charity that placed Him a captive in the power of the Jews in order to deliver you from the captivity of the devil; charity that thrust Him into Pilate's prison to save you from being cast into the prison of hell. Now, my soul, you have the opportunity of daily admiring, daily marvelling at the helplessness and patience of our Lord in captivity, as we shall proceed to show.

3d. Consider Jesus imprisoned in the tabernacle. **Ob-**

serve how He is here voluntarily confined under the species of bread. He voluntarily abides day and night in the dark and narrow prison of the tabernacle, and alas! how completely helpless this great and glorious Prisoner is here. How utterly defenceless He is against profanation of all kinds at the hands of sacrilegious persons! And with what amazing patience He suffers Himself to be touched by unworthy lips, to be received into unworthy hearts! Look with astonishment, my soul, at the humility wherewith the divine Prisoner conceals Himself under the appearance of bread, of an ordinary, insignificant morsel of bread. Observe that no cabin is too lowly for Him to enter, no beggar too poor to entertain Him as his Guest. All this He does out of love for you. As in the dungeon at Jerusalem, so now He remains in the prison of the tabernacle wholly and solely out of love for you. Now ask yourself seriously, my soul, how often do you visit this divine Prisoner, how often do you effect His release in the only way open to you, that is, by preparing for Him a suitable dwelling-place in your heart; ask yourself if, after all, your conduct has not resembled that of the servants of the high priest, if you have not taken your Lord out of His voluntary prison-house, in order by your unworthy Communion to drag Him to Calvary and there crucify Him afresh.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD'S TRANSFIGURATION.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to leave the hard and sorrowful way of the cross, whereon in your meditation during the past week you have followed our Lord's footsteps, and seek rest and refreshment in the contemplation of the sublime and glorious picture unfolded before your eyes in to-day's Gospel. Gaze in imagination on your Lord upon Thabor; see how His countenance shines as the sun, and His raiment has become white and glitter-

ing as snow. Behold Him in such glory, such majesty that the enraptured apostles would fain remain forever on Thabor that they might continually enjoy this beatific vision. If you, my soul, witnessing only in spirit the majesty of our Lord experience something of that same felicity, consider what follows:

1st. Jesus has good reasons for selecting Peter, James and John to be the witnesses of His glorification. These three were most deserving of all the apostles to be thus privileged, for none other was as firmly rooted in faith as Peter, who before any one else declared his unquestioning belief: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." (St. Matt. xvi. 16.) And that which Peter was the first to proclaim with such certitude, James was the first to seal with his blood, for he was the first of the apostles who suffered martyrdom. John testified to the truth by his life; he was the virgin apostle, the apostle of charity. Wherefore, my soul, if you desire to be admitted to enjoyment of the divine favors and taste somewhat of celestial bliss on Thabor, ask yourself previously if you have Peter's faith; if you can drink with James the chalice of suffering; if, remembering our Lord's words: "The clean of heart shall see God" (St. Matt. v. 8) you can say that, like John, you possess the most beautiful, the indispensable ornament of a Priest and a Religious, holy chastity?

2d. Consider why our Lord was transfigured before entering upon His Passion. Only a short time previously, before He went up on the heights of Thabor, our Saviour taught His disciples the all-important doctrine of the cross; saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." (St. Luke ix. 23.) That same cross which our Lord Himself took upon His shoulders shortly after His transfiguration, and the fact that the transfiguration took place within the period wherein our Lord by precept and example calls upon His followers to bear the cross, shows us that He intends thereby to set before us the grand, the glorious goal whither the way of the cross leads, to reveal to us the

sublime reward of those who bear the cross with cheerful patience. Never forget that, my soul! It is indeed true that you must suffer here below—pre-eminently if you are striving to be a good Priest, an exemplary Religious, a devout Christian, and a zealous servant of Christ—you must suffer much affliction, many tribulations; you must take on yourself the practice of self-denial and mortification; but be of good heart, by means of all this you will attain to be glorified with Christ; your countenance, now so sorrowful, shall shine as the sun, and your body, chaste and mortified, shall glitter as the snow in the bright radiance of celestial light.

3d. Consider that, in spite of Peter's entreaty: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles" (St. Luke ix. 33) our Lord comes down from Mount Thabor, in order to take the same three apostles with Him onto another mountain, the Mount of Olives. Hence we may learn an important lesson. It happens sometimes that our Lord grants you even on earth an earnest and foretaste of future glory; that He imparts to your soul such joy and sweetness, He gives you such sensible devotion and supernatural happiness, that you are ready to exclaim with St. Peter: It is good to be here, let us make tabernacles here. But remember, this is not possible here on earth. Only occasionally does our Lord allow these precious drops of heavenly dew to distil into your soul; only once does He take you up onto Mount Thabor to renew your strength and revive your courage. Afterwards you must be prepared for fresh sufferings, you must nerve yourself to encounter fresh trials, and ever bear in mind that it was not from Mount Thabor, but from Olivet, that our Lord's ascension took place. Let the remembrance of this preserve you from pride in the hour of consolation, from despondency in the season of tribulation.

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN
LENT.ON THE BLOW OUR LORD RECEIVED UPON HIS SACRED
COUNTEenance.

It was about midnight when our Lord reached the palace of Annas the high priest, who, with the Pharisees who had assembled there, was impatiently awaiting the arrival of the detested Nazarene with undisguised feelings of malicious pleasure, spiteful craft and bitter scorn. Try to realize this painful scene in our Lord's Passion. Behold Him in the high priest's house, standing before His iniquitous judges, pale as death, worn and weary, His garments besmeared with mire, His head sunk on His breast, His hands bound with cords, speechless in presence of the chief council. And when at last He returns a quiet, dignified answer to the question put to Him with the cold contempt and pride of a haughty Jew, by Annas, one of the servants standing by strikes Him on the face.

1st. Consider the gross cruelty of that blow. Tradition tells us that the hand of the soldier who dealt the blow was covered with an iron glove; and thus armed with all his might he strikes the sorrowful face of the Saviour, so that He staggers beneath the pain of the blow and blood flows from His mouth and nose. O cruel blow, all the more barbarous because it was given without reason, and the pain it inflicted was intensified by the mockery, the contemptuous laughter, the murmur of applause wherewith the Pharisees greeted the inhuman action. There our Lord stands with the blood running down His cheek, and no one comes forward to wipe away the traces of the blow. "Alas!" cries St. Chrysostom, "is our God to be received with buffets! Grow dark, ye heavens, with horror; O earth, tremble at such a deed!" As for you, my soul, weep and bewail your sin, for it is that which struck the cruel blow.

2d. Consider the reason why the servant of the high priest gave our Lord this buffet. He had no just cause to do so. He only saw the ill-concealed annoyance that the high priest felt at our Lord's dignified defence of Himself, and the officious menial could not refrain from covering his master's discomfiture in his own coarse, rough fashion. It was the desire to gain the favor of man, it was human respect that guided his hand. Pause, my soul, and reflect how often from similar motives you have in your way buffeted your Lord. Your heart would have been in the best dispositions, you would have been content to serve Christ and keep His law, the idea of offering Him an affront would never have entered your mind, if it had not been that through the dread of losing the favor of this or that person, the fear of giving offence in this or that quarter, you acted against the better impulses of your heart, the warnings of your conscience. How foolish this was and how wrong! You shrink from displeasing man, but you are not afraid to give your God a blow! Listen, is that not the reproachful voice of Jesus, whom you have perhaps this very day struck upon the face, which calls to you in pain and grief: What wrong have I done thee? Have I not called thee to the sacerdotal, the Religious state, abounding in privileges and graces; why strikest thou Me? Why dost thou break one after another of the precepts, the regulations binding on thee, out of human respect, out of desire to gain the favor of man?

3d. Consider the marvellous meekness Jesus displayed when He received this brutal blow. Although He could have caused the impious wretch who dealt it to fall dead on the spot, although He, who healed the withered hand of the mason in the temple, could with equal ease have rendered powerless that sacrilegious hand that struck Him, yet all anger, all desire for revenge is so alien to His spirit, that in sublime composure He only permits His bleeding lips to murmur the gentle reproach: "Why strikest thou Me?" (St. John xviii. 23.) Compare yourself, my soul, with this grand example of meekness. See

how a God answers and acts who is treated with the utmost contumely, who is cruelly buffeted, and blush to think that you, a mortal man, a sinner, can cherish resentment for days, for weeks, on account of some thoughtless speech, some jest not meant to wound, uttered by one of your Brethren or Sisters; or perhaps because of a reprimand—it may be of somewhat undue severity—administered by your Superior; and for this slight hurt which you have received you will cause dissension and disquiet to a whole Community. You forget that in acting thus you give a blow, a cruel blow, to your meek and gentle Lord.

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON ST. PETER'S DENIAL OF OUR LORD.

If, in the palace of Annas the high priest, our Lord had to endure the suffering of a cruel buffet, in the house of Caiphas, whither He was next led, His tender heart had to sustain a yet more painful blow in the denial of all knowledge of Him by Peter, the chief of the apostles. Try to realize this sorrowful occurrence; see the apostle, standing with the soldiers and servants in the outer court; before the cock has crowed twice he denies his Master no less than three times; denies Him for whom he swore that he would die, from whom he has received nothing but benefits and graces. The fall of the apostle was indeed far more painful for Jesus than the blow dealt by the rough soldier's hand.

1st. Consider the sinfulness of this denial. Peter went into the court of the high priest from the best of motives, out of love to our Lord. His heartfelt affection for his Master made him anxious to know what befell Him; but fear soon gains the ascendancy, and the courage he displayed on Mount Olivet sinks to a low ebb. Now when he is unexpectedly asked whether he too is not one of Jesus' disciples, the question takes him by surprise, and

out of sheer timidity, without a moment's reflection he hastens to declare that he is not. But if this may be pleaded in his excuse, alas! the first fall is surely and speedily followed by another, like links in a chain, and the second is a worse one; see how in this instance the offence is added to at each repetition. The second time Peter confirms his lie with an oath; the third time he goes still further and accompanies his denial with curses and imprecations. O unhappy apostle, how low thou hast fallen! Learn a salutary lesson from this, my soul; learn to beware of a first sin. If like St. Peter you allow yourself, not out of malice aforethought, but merely from human respect and precipitation, to be led into an infraction of the law of God, an infringement of your Rule, then the dyke is already broken through. Satan has already put one of his fetters upon you. You will soon sin again, sin more easily, more thoughtlessly, and the third time you will divest yourself of all shame and scruple. Resist beginnings! Do not give so much as your little finger to the devil; let the resolution you make to-day be to guard against the commencement of evil.

2d. Consider the cause of St. Peter's denial. If we picture the apostle to ourselves, if we remember the courage and generous fervor that marked his words shortly before the Last Supper, his conduct upon the Mount of Olives, it seems perfectly inconceivable how in so short a time he could have changed so utterly and could have gone so far as to deny his Master. There is not, however, much cause for wonder. The cause of his fall was three-fold. In the first place he exposed himself to temptation with culpable, foolhardy rashness; he actually sought the occasion of falling by going among the bitterest enemies of our Lord. Can you feel any surprise, my soul, that by going so close to the fire he got burnt, that by touching pitch his hands were defiled? He who wilfully incurs danger must not wonder if he perishes in that danger. The second cause of the apostle's fall was his undue confidence in himself, not to say his pride. He alone—as if his fellow apostles were below his notice—presumes to declare

that he will go with our Lord unto death, and will not allow any one to assert the contrary; nay, he will not even pay any heed to the loving warning our Lord addresses to him, so confident is he of his own strength and fidelity. But alas! pride comes before a fall, even in the case of an apostle. The third cause is that Peter lost sight of Jesus, lost sight of Him physically and spiritually. As long as he had his Master before him, not only present to his bodily eyes but present to his spiritual vision in His character of his God and his Lord, his fidelity and courage did not waver. But as soon as Jesus was no longer visible to His outward eye, and he no longer with the eye of faith beheld Him to be the Son of God, then he said: "I know not the Man of whom you speak." (St. Mark xiv. 71.) Then he fell, and how great was his fall! Here again is a lesson for you, my soul. If you would guard against falling, avoid occasions of sin; do not rashly rush into danger; and if temptation comes, do not withstand it as Peter did, in reliance on your own strength, but with firm confidence in God. Keep God always before your eyes and before your mind. Whoso walks continually in the presence of God will not fall; hence it is the chief and surest preservative against sin to accustom oneself habitually to remember the presence of God.

3d. The benefit to be derived from this denial. This occurrence is fraught with twofold profit: it was profitable for Peter, it is profitable for us. St. Peter was destined for great things. He was to be the rock, the foundation of the Church, the ruler of all the faithful, the chief pastor of Christ's flock. Well was it for him that his own fall kept him ever humble, and inspired him with charity and compassion towards the wandering sheep. Wherefore, my soul, learn to be truly humble and full of compassion for sinners, for if you are not, be assured that God will permit you to fall, in order that you may thereby acquire these virtues. But if you have already fallen, how much consolation you will derive from Peter's denial of Christ! If so great an apostle, one so warm-hearted and fervent, fell into sin, such grievous sin, let his fall

serve to keep you on the one hand from discouragement and despondency, if you have had the same misfortune, and on the other hand to admonish you to be constantly vigilant and cautious; for if an apostle could swerve so far from the right way, must not you, who are a sinner, be ever on your guard?

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON ST. PETER'S REPENTANCE.

To-day, my soul, fix your attention on that most affecting scene which was enacted in the high priest's palace after Peter's denial of our Lord. Just at that moment Jesus was conducted across the court, and He turned His pale, sorrowful countenance towards the apostle, looking at him with a pained and yet most affectionate expression. When Peter sees his Master, sees how pathetically, how pitifully he looks at Him, a sense of his guilt, the consciousness of his crime overwhelms him. He had sinned against Jesus, his afflicted Lord, now subjected to such terrible suffering; he had actually denied Him. Now the knowledge of this is borne in upon the unhappy apostle in all its force, and almost beside himself with grief, he hurries from the spot in the bitterness of his repentance.

1st. Consider this point: Peter leaves the court where he had been standing, he quits the scene of his sin. That was the first step in the path of penance. He will not stay a single second longer in the place where he had fallen so deeply; not a moment longer will he tarry in the company of those persons who were the cause of this fall. Here you see the first fruit of repentance, and also the first condition of penance. Fly from danger, fly every occasion of sin. Nothing else is of any avail. No tears of penitence, no practices of penance are of any use unless you cut yourself off previously from the occasion of sin, unless you forcibly tear yourself away from intercourse with those

who lead you to sin, unless you avoid all that tempts you to sin. And mark this also, my soul—you must immediately act as Peter did; all delay is dangerous, it is a link wherewith the devil binds you afresh to the sin which you may perhaps deeply bewail.

2d. Consider furthermore that Peter withdraws into solitude. His fault is committed amid the tumult of the world, whilst he sojourns amongst his fellow men; his penance is begun in solitude far from the busy world. There in calm seclusion his storm-tossed, shipwrecked soul will be once more at rest. There he will come to himself, he will come to the knowledge of God, and labor uninterrupted at the task of healing the sore wound his soul has sustained. Hence learn that flight from the world, flight into solitude is the second condition of true penance. Withdraw from the turmoil of human society, where your heart will never find repose and self-knowledge. As the author of the Imitation says: “In silence and quiet the devout soul finds floods of tears with which she may wash and cleanse herself every night, that she may become the more familiar with her Creator the further she lives from all worldly tumult.” (Im. B. i. ch. 20.) Of this you see an exemplification in Peter. In the noisy court he sins, in the lonely place he sheds tears.

3d. Consider how he begins to weep bitterly. His tears flow freely, not tears evoked by fear of punishment, but by contrition and love, which will cleanse his soul from the stain of the sins he has committed. Nor was it on that night only that Peter wept; every time he heard a cock crow, those penitential tears gushed forth afresh in expiation, so that according to the ancient tradition, two deep furrows on his cheeks marked their course. See that you also, my soul, mourn for your sins with a like bitter grief. You are, it is true, more or less safeguarded from them by God’s mercy since you entered the Religious state, or since your conversion, but never forget that you are a penitent; this remembrance will make all that is hard in your state light and easy, all that is bitter, sweet; it will enable you to bear hardships and humiliations more read-

ily, and if the stream of your contrite tears should dry up, then apply yourself to the contemplation of your suffering Lord, of Jesus persecuted and afflicted; see how He looks at you as He once looked upon Peter, with the same sorrowful, appealing expression, pained by your many, your countless transgressions and misdeeds—committed in spite of the many graces you have received—and assuredly tears of sincere compunction will again flow from your eyes.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD IN THE HOUSE OF CAIPHAS.

Behold Jesus arraigned before the chief council. Look, my soul, at the countenances of the men who arrogate to themselves the right to judge Him; deceitfulness and rage are written on every one of them; see with what cold contempt Caiphas treats the Saviour standing before him in dignified silence, conscious of His innocence, an Angel of light in the presence of the Spirit of darkness. When at last our Lord opens His lips and acknowledges Himself to be the Son of God, imagine the outburst of savage fury, the angry outeries of the whole assembly; see how Caiphas rends his garments and exclaims: “ You have heard the blasphemy, what think you?” (St. Mark xiv. 64.)

1st. Consider the base deceit of our Lord’s enemies. They conceal their hatred and envy under the cloak of zeal for God’s glory. They stigmatize the pronouncement of divine truth as blasphemy, and proceed to pass sentence of death upon Jesus as if the honor of the Most High demanded it. They use God’s name to cover their crime. What unheard of impiety! Yet how often do we see this done; the enemies of our Lord have at all times decreed the destruction of the Church, condemned our Lord to death under the pretext of zeal for God and for the cause

of religion. And if you are sincere with yourself, my soul, ask your heart if you have not many a time under the mask of anxiety for God's glory, for the interests of the Church or of your Order, vented on your neighbor sentiments long concealed of anger and aversion. Ask yourself whether you have not been guilty of uncharitable judgments and detraction, making it appear all the time as if you were acting solely for the sake of truth. Not without good reason did the Psalmist say: *Omnis homo mendax*, "Every man is a liar" (Ps. cxv. 2); man lies to himself more frequently, more willingly than to any one else, deluding himself with the belief that he is doing for God what he is only doing to serve his own selfish ends.

2d. Consider how shamefully the servants, imitating their masters, treat our Lord. They lead Him away out of the judgment hall to the prison, and there they begin—the mere thought of it is too horrible—to spit in His face. How awful an outrage! Consider what God is and what man is, and you will indeed shudder at it. Man spits in the face of his God, he spits in that countenance whereon the angels gaze in reverential awe, on that countenance which the whole world will one day behold with trembling, when it is revealed in all its terrible majesty. What are you most horrified at, my soul, the treatment our Lord received at the hands of His judges, or at that of their minions?

3d. Consider that it is in the high priest's house that our Lord is thus maltreated; there it is that He, the High Priest for ever, is so brutally used. Alas! how often Jesus suffers insults from the quarter where one would least expect it, in a house that is actually consecrated to His service! One is not surprised if our Lord is outraged and mishandled in the camp of His enemies, but if He is thus served in the house of His friends, in the sanctuary of God, in a community of Priests or Religious who are supposed to be devoted to the divine service, how doubly painful must this be to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Now ask yourself seriously, my soul, how often you may perhaps yourself have in a spiritual sense spit in your Lord's face;

how often you have sullied your soul, made in the image of God, by grievous sin. O believe me, mortal sin is far more abhorrent, disgusting in God's sight than the filthy spittle of the high priest's servants. Up then, my soul, cleanse your countenance—the image of God,—from this impurity.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE DELIVERING OF OUR LORD TO PILATE FOR JUDGMENT.

Endeavor, my soul, to realize what a dreadful night our Lord passed through. Represent to yourself once again His awful agony, His deadly conflict on Mount Olivet; with what cruelty He was dragged to Annas first and then to Caiaphas; the unjust treatment He received from His judges, the barbarous manner in which their minions mishandled Him in the prison. Ah no; only at the last day will be fully known the extent of the brutality, the mockery, the contumely, the villany wherewith the coarse soldiery set at naught their God and their Lord in the prison. But now that dreadful night is past, and the first rays of the rising sun penetrate into the gloomy dungeon where He is confined.

1st. Consider how momentous is the day that now opens. It is the day that the world has looked forward to for centuries, the day whose advent the patriarchs in Limbo have long anticipated with ardent yearnings, the day for which Jesus Himself has longed during the three and thirty years of His life on earth, the day of man's redemption, the day whereon the world is to be reconciled to God by the death of Christ. Picture to yourself the manner in which the Redeemer hails the dawn of this day. When the first faint streaks of light fell tremblingly upon the sacred Lamb of God, so shamefully maltreated in that dismal dungeon, may it not be imagined that He raised His

hands, tightly bound as they were with cords, to greet the dawning day; how touching must His morning prayer have been, how fervent the thanks He renders to His heavenly Father that the day has at length come which is the goal of His earthly career, the day on which the portals of Heaven will be thrown open, Hell will be vanquished and the will of His heavenly Father accomplished. While Jesus welcomes the day in so edifying, so touching a manner, with His enemies the very reverse is the case. They greet the day with feelings of rage and hatred; they greet it with diabolical delight, because it is now in their power to put the Nazarene to death; no word of prayer or of thankfulness passes their lips; all their schemes, their aspirations breathe murder and malice; this day is for them not one of blessing, but of cursing. My soul, every day is equally momentous for you, for on each and every day your Lord suffers death anew in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Ask yourself how you begin the day; reflect when the first rays of light penetrate into your room, your cell, that a fresh day is beginning which may be either for your salvation or your perdition. For your salvation, if you stand beneath the cross, erected not on Calvary but on the altar where Mass is celebrated, either with John's purity of soul, or with Magdalen's contrition of heart; for your perdition, if your spirit is that of the Jews, one of hatred and blasphemy, and you only employ the day to crucify the Son of God afresh by your sinful deeds.

2d. Consider the decision come to by the Jews, to deliver up Jesus to the Gentile governor. The death of Jesus is the one object of their schemes and their exertions. And because they did not themselves possess the power and authority to execute the sentence of death, they determine to surrender the innocent Lamb of God to the pagan procurator. Thus they deliver one of their own race and nation to an alien, they give up a Worshipper of the one true God to an idolater, their King to a foreign official, their God into the hands of a man. To such lengths can blind hatred go! How often, however, has the same thing happened! How often have

Christian people, the children of God, sold their heavenly Father to the heathen, as Jacob's sons did their brother, out of hatred, or covetousness, or some other vile passion. Alas! perhaps you too, my soul, must plead guilty to having delivered your Lord whom you have received into your heart, over to your passions to be crucified, to having handed Christ over to the godless Pilate, since you have, from motives of human respect, the desire to gain popularity, violated the sacred precepts of the Church, the rules of your Order. Bewail your fault and promise amendment.

3d. Consider how our Lord was dragged before Pilate's judgment-seat. The Pharisees and high priests went first, arrayed in festive vestments, and Jesus followed, surrounded by the servants and executioners, His wrists fettered, His countenance fearfully disfigured by the ill-treatment He endured in the preceding night, ashy pale, His features seamed and swollen from the blows He had received, His hair tangled, His beard torn, a pitiable and sorrowful object. The mob surged around Him, the populace, both high and low, pursuing Him with mocking taunts and maledictions. Thus the Redeemer staggered in pain through the very streets which only a short time before rang with the shouts of hosanna raised by a thousand voices, the very streets where only a short time before the sick had been laid, in order that the Lord when passing by might heal them.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN AS WE SEE HER ON THE MORNING OF THE DAY OF OUR LORD'S CRUCIFIXION.

If, my soul, you are astonished at the ingratitude and fickleness of the people, let it teach you never, never to let yourself be influenced by the desire for popular applause, least of all in matters connected with your sacred

ministry. And if in the discharge of your sacerdotal functions you meet with hatred and opposition, if in the public streets your ecclesiastical garb draws down on you mockery and contempt, remember how much our Lord had to suffer on the way to Pilate's house, where He was to be judged, and you will willingly bear shame with Him and for Him.

Now, as to-day is dedicated to the Mother of God, turn your attention once more to the Blessed Virgin Mary, dwelling in solitude and seclusion in Lazarus' house. Picture her to yourself praying in resignation to the will of God for her divine, her suffering Son, interceding for the salvation of mankind. Footsteps are heard hastily approaching; it is a disciple, it is John coming from Caiphas' house with the mournful tidings: "He is condemned to death." Keep this affecting scene before your eyes during your meditation.

1st. Consider the grief this intelligence caused Mary. Who can describe the feelings of her maternal heart while John narrated to her with tears all that her divine Son had undergone since the previous day; while he depicted His sweat of blood in the garden, His arrest, the maltreatment He received in the house of Annas and of Caiphas. Every word of this narrative inflicted a fresh wound on her maternal heart; but how acutely that loving heart must have been pained by the terrible tidings that one of the apostles betrayed his Master, and another—O incredible, heartrending fact!—another denied Him, and that one was Peter! Imagine a mother whose only son has gone abroad. During his absence she has become a widow; she is alone in the world; she has no one left her on earth but that son who is at a distance. One day she is informed that he is sentenced to death, although innocent of the crimes imputed to him. Will not this news come upon her like a thunderbolt, and every fresh detail of the brutal treatment he received, the sufferings he endured, pierce her soul like a sharp sword? Now this is only what happened literally in the case of the Blessed Virgin. Judge then how overwhelming must her grief

have been; how the tears of compassion must have coursed down her pale, sorrow-stricken countenance! Yet you remain so cold, so indifferent, and perhaps even meditate for weeks on our Lord's Passion without any real, heartfelt emotion. Whence is this?

2d. Consider Mary's resignation to the will of God. Although at the outset her maternal affection revolted from the idea of her Son enduring such agony, although under the first stress of her affliction she earnestly prayed that her heavenly Father would not permit anything so awful to take place, yet it cannot be doubted that she who, on a former occasion, when the angel announced to her that divine maternity which was fraught with so much pain, only said: "Be it done unto me according to thy word," again repeated the self-same pious words. Is it not an affecting sight, my soul, when you contemplate the Blessed Virgin pierced as she is with sorrow, transfixed with anguish, overwhelmed with grief, yet willing to sacrifice the Being dearest to her on earth, to sacrifice her Son for the glory of God and the salvation of this miserable world? Would that you would learn of Mary! God has required, He does require from you that which it costs you most to give, the sacrifice most bitter to your heart. He requires you to part from the parents you love, from your brothers and sisters, your relatives and friends. You have made the sacrifice out of love to God and in the hope of doing more to promote the spiritual welfare of the world. If perchance you may be tempted to regret what you have done, think of Mary on the morning of the day when Jesus was to be put to death, and with her renew cheerfully the oblation you once offered.

3d. Consider that Mary goes at once to join her Son. She is not content with weeping for Him, mourning on His account. She desires to suffer with Him. If all men forsake Him, if even His apostles take flight, He shall at least have the consolation of seeing that His Mother remains faithful to Him, that she will stand beside Him with constant affection to His life's end. Therefore in

the early morning she leaves the house and hastens to meet her divine Son, she the most afflicted, the most sorrowful yet the most admirable of all the mothers in Israel. Rise up also, my soul; let not the Mother of God pursue her toilsome way along the rugged way of the cross alone; follow after her, go with her. During this Passion-tide meditate frequently, meditate attentively on our Lord's sufferings; walk in His footsteps carrying your cross cheerfully, the cross of your state and calling, or the cross God lays on you in particular; thus you will be in very truth a son, a daughter of Blessed Mary, the Mother of dolors.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE DEVIL THAT WAS DUMB.

Can you, my soul, imagine a case more melancholy, more pitiable than that of the hapless individual of whom we read in the Gospel for to-day, who was possessed by a devil? In consequence of this possession the unfortunate man had lost the use of speech; he was blind, as St. Matthew tells us (ch. xii. 22), and to fill up the measure of his affliction, he was, as St. Chrysostom asserts, at the same time deaf. Realize as far as you can the deplorable condition of this man, blind, deaf and dumb, and when you are fully impressed with his misery remind yourself that he is typical of the sinner who, possessed by a dumb devil, will not confess his sins.

1st. Consider the blindness of the sinner. The devil has taken up his abode in that man's heart as in a strong citadel; he has closed the doors by which he might be driven out, for he darkens the interior sight of the man to prevent him from discerning his spiritual state, the danger of eternal damnation that hangs over him. Consequently he does not feel his need of help, of deliverance out of his perilous situation. Alas, what an appalling condition! Such sinners are like a man who walks blind-

folded along a narrow plank laid over a deep abyss, or they may be compared to one who, prostrated by a violent attack of fever, considers himself nevertheless to be quite well, and will not take any remedies, so that there is no hope of saving his life. My soul, guard against this blindness by diligent and thorough examination of your conscience, and ever remember the maxim: "Better judge thyself than be judged by God."

2d. Consider that he is dumb. The sinner may possibly be aware of his lamentable condition; he may feel the stings of conscience, but a devil that is dumb dwells within his heart and holds his tongue bound, so that either he does not confess his sins at all, or he passes over in silence one or more; or again, he accuses himself in general in terms so vague, indefinite and insincere, that the Confessor cannot form a correct idea of his spiritual state. To compass this end Satan employs all manner of pretexts. He deludes the sinner into thinking that he has done all that is necessary, or he suggests that he should speak more explicitly later on to a wiser, more experienced Priest, or that he should make a clean conscience in his next general confession.

O fatal delusion! Is it not madness to know that one is sick, sick unto death, and yet refuse to see the physician who could effect a cure? Is it not madness to conceal your hurt, and suffer twice as much as you need because you are ashamed to speak of it? As St. Gregory says, sores that are not open are by far the most painful, for if the matter that collects and festers is discharged from the wound it affords great relief to the sufferer. Likewise in the case of the sinner who, being possessed of a dumb devil, will not confess his sins; the pangs of conscience become ever more acute, more torturing; it is with him as with one who is unwell, who constantly feels sick, and can find no alleviation until he has been thoroughly purged from the ill-humors that cause the nausea. That is just what the sinner will not do. Beware, my soul, of harboring the dumb devil! The Psalmist says: "Because I was silent my bones grew old." (Ps. xxxi. 3.)

Wherefore do not keep silence, but make a full confession and your soul shall live.

3d. Consider his deafness. If a sinner such as has been described perseveres for any length of time in his culpable, fatal reticence, the devil that is dumb deprives him of the sense of hearing. Then however often the warning voice of conscience speaks, however loudly and persistently the exhortations of Confessors, of Preachers, of Superiors knock at the closed door of his obdurate heart, however often God sends severe afflictions to rouse him from his apathy, all is in vain. He hears those appeals no more than the deaf man hears the peal of thunder. In his blindness and deafness he speeds headlong to the abyss of hell. O unhappy mortal! Alas! my soul, how sad to think that not a few of those who at this season are invited by the Good Shepherd to listen to His voice when they fulfil the Easter precept, are and will remain under the influence of this dumb devil. Pray for them, pray for them during the present week; undertake some voluntary act of penance, offer the holy sacrifice with the intention that Jesus will of His tender mercy drive out this terrible devil that is dumb from those who are about to make their Easter confession.

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS.

To-day, my soul, place before your eyes the unhappy traitor Judas, whose guilty conscience allows him no peace, no rest on the day of our Lord's crucifixion. See how he runs first to the chief priests, and flings the blood-money he received from them down on the ground at their feet with abhorrence, and then, half-demented with grief, tortured with pangs of conscience, he departs out of the city, takes a rope and hangs himself. This awful end of an apostle, of one who was chosen to inherit eternal

felicity and to occupy one of the highest places in the kingdom of God will be the subject of your meditation to-day.

1st. Judas did almost everything appertaining to penance. He acknowledged his sin, he felt bitter compunction, he was almost frantic with grief, he even confessed his transgression and cried aloud in the presence of the chief priests: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (St. Matt. xxvii. 4.) Finally he went so far as to fling away the pieces of silver given him as the price of his iniquity, with loathing; and yet, in spite of his penance, he was eternally lost. What was the reason of this? It was because he despaired of God's mercy. If instead of going to the Jewish priests he had betaken himself to Jesus, the divine High Priest upon the cross, if he had confessed his guilt at the foot of the cross, he would have been saved. But in his despair he did not do this. See, my soul, how cunningly the devil acts. First of all he inspires the sinner with overweening confidence, so that he sins recklessly in rash reliance on God's mercy, and after the sin has been committed he fills the soul of the transgressor with mistrust of that same divine mercy. Wherefore beware of presumption in the first place and you will not fall into despair afterwards.

2d. Consider that Judas in his penitential sorrow applied to the wrong physician for aid. The unhappy apostle confessed his sin to those who were impotent to deliver him from it; he exposed the wounds of his soul to physicians who were themselves laboring under a fatal disease. Instead of consolation he met with nothing but cold contempt: "What is that to us? Look thou to it." So spake the chief priests, and very probably their pitiless words put the climax to his despair. Learn hence a lesson of great importance for the spiritual life. Speak of the disease you are suffering from, disclose the wounds of your soul, the temptations and dangers that imperil your salvation only to those who are qualified and authorized to help you, your Superiors and the director of your conscience. The loss of many souls has been brought

about through their having chosen to confide their temptations, their transgressions, not to their Confessor or Superior, but to other persons who perchance were victims of the self-same malady. Thus both were only strengthened in evil, and one blind man leading the other, both fell into the pit. Let the example of the unhappy Judas be a warning to you; alarmed by his awful fate, lay to heart seriously to-day the maxims of the Wise Man: "Open not thy heart to every man. Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor." (Eccl. viii. 22; vi. 6.)

3d. Consider that Judas' fate was not undeserved. How often divine grace had knocked at the door of his heart! How lovingly our Lord admonished him at the Last Supper! Was not the washing of feet, were not the pathetic words: "One of you shall betray Me" (St. John xxiii. 21), was not the bread dipped and given to him, each and all so many urgent exhortations to him to return and repent? They were all in vain. And even when the act of treachery was accomplished, was not the charity of our Lord, who addressed the traitor by the name of friend, and in divine meekness returned the treacherous kiss, a last tender appeal to his disloyal heart? It too was in vain. One single look sufficed to convert the apostle who denied our Lord, but graces lavished on the traitor failed to overcome his obduracy; and when at last his conscience was awakened, it was too late, the season of grace was past. Learn, my soul, this one thing from Judas: Never trifle with divine grace. You can never know when you have reached the limit of that which is assigned to you. Perhaps your last confession, the most recent reprimand of your Superior, the latest fraternal warning addressed to you by your Brethren in religion, may have been for you the final call of grace; wherefore see that you do not turn a deaf ear to it with the stubbornness of a Judas, but obey it with the penitence of Peter.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD IN THE PRESENCE OF PILATE.

Imagine, my soul, that you see the Saviour arraigned before the judgment-seat of the Roman governor. Pilate gazes in astonishment at the Accused standing before him in sublime majesty and dignified silence, His whole appearance and deportment seeming sufficient refutation of the statements of His accusers. Hatred and sullen rage are plainly depicted on the countenances of these men, as they surround our Lord, He standing speechless in their midst, while they shriek out their false charges in a confused medley of voices. All that they bring against our Lord is utterly untrue and unfounded. The reason why they have delivered Him up to Pilate, the reason why they demand that He should be put to death is to be sought elsewhere.

1st. Our Lord Himself acquaints Pilate with the real reason why He is accused by saying: "For this I came into the world that I should give testimony to the truth." (St. John xviii. 37.) John was cast into prison and left to languish there because he had spoken the truth regardless of consequences, and for the same cause Jesus is now brought before Pilate. The fact that He taught the truth, proclaiming it fearlessly and thereby exposing the ungodly, hypocritical conduct of the chief priests and Pharisees and reprobating it severely, affords the clue to their hatred of Him, their lying accusations, their angry cry: "Crucify Him!" The troublesome Preacher of unpleasant truths must perforce be silenced, the unwelcome Light must be extinguished. Consider this, my soul, and ask yourself whether the real reason why you dislike this or that Superior, why you feel an antipathy to this or that Brother, why you find fault with your Confessor, why a certain sermon, a book assigned to you for your spiritual reading does not commend itself to you, is not because the truth is

borne in upon you too forcibly? No doubt you imagine the cause to be something quite different, but is it not worth while for you to examine to-day whether this is not the true motive at the bottom, as it was in the case of our Lord's accusers?

2d. Consider the other reason of the accusations brought against our Lord, one which Pilate fully perceived, that the Jews had delivered Him from envy. Even at the time of His entry into Jerusalem the Pharisees, devoured with jealousy, exclaimed: "Behold the whole world is gone after Him." (St. John xii. 19.) Our Lord was a constant thorn in their side because they wanted a monopoly of the respect and esteem of the Jewish people. Consequently they desired His death, for the sake of getting rid of a dangerous rival. St. Chrysostom is indeed right when he says that envy oftentimes gives rise to murder, and that it so greatly deludes the human heart as to render it incapable of discerning what is right and just. Although even pagan justice could not do otherwise than acknowledge our Lord's innocence, yet envy mastered the Jews to such an extent that they determined to obtain by foul means what they could not obtain by fair means, and in defiance of justice to carry their point by force of compulsion and by dint of clamorous outcries. This shows us how detestable is this vice. Of how much mischief, of how much strife is it not the author in families, in ecclesiastical bodies, in religious communities. Wherefore examine yourself attentively to ascertain whether you are not infected by this widespread spiritual malady.

3d. Consider finally the main reason why our Lord was delivered to Pilate: because it was the will of God. Jesus was given up to the unjust judge that we might not have to fear the just Judge. In order that we, the true culprits, might have life, He, the innocent Victim, was condemned to death. In order that we might have a merciful sentence, He caused a most severe one to be passed upon Himself. O my soul, awaken the deepest gratitude of your heart, marvel at the infinite charity of God; resolve never again by your harsh and uncharitable judgments of your

fellow man to set yourself up to act the part of an unjust judge to our Lord, whom you condemn in the person of your neighbor. And if you in your turn have a hard, unjust sentence passed on you, if you suffer as a martyr to the truth or as a victim of the envy of others, remember that the chief reason why you have to suffer such treatment is that it is the will of God, who intends it for your trial and your sanctification; and this thought will enable you to submit to it in silence, as Jesus did in the presence of Pilate.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD'S CONDUCT IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD.

The scene in our Lord's Passion which you are invited to contemplate to-day is a singular and a striking one. Herod, whose hands are stained with the blood of St. John the Baptist, is seated upon the soft cushions of his throne, arrayed in his regal robes, surrounded by a brilliant court, in which external splendor and state ceremonial veil the licentiousness lurking beneath. In the marble halls before the throne priests and Pharisees move restlessly to and fro; and amidst all these men—in whom little virtue is to be found—Jesus stands, patient and silent. Look well at Him, my soul, impress His image deeply on your mind.

1st. Consider that our Lord remains silent from a sense of His sublime dignity. The tyrant condescends so far as to accost the Prisoner who is on every hand so shamefully maltreated, in a kind and friendly manner. “He questioned Him in many words, but Jesus answered him nothing.” His accusers lift up their voices, hurling falsehoods and calumnies at their innocent Victim. A single word from our Lord's lips would have sufficed to unmask these liars; but He answers them nothing. Why, O divine Word, who gavest speech to the tongues of all men, who didst so often

preach to the people with the wisdom from on high, why dost Thou now keep silence, why dost Thou not speak in presence of an audience superior to any Thou hadst heretofore? This is the reason: Because Jesus, standing before a dissolute monarch and his yet more dissolute courtiers, is not forgetful of the maxim He Himself enunciated: "Cast ye not your pearls before swine." (St. Matt. vii. 6.) He valued His own doctrine too highly, He deemed the word of God too sublime, to make it the sport of idle curiosity; He, otherwise so humble, has too keen a sense of His own personal sanctity and exalted nature, not to feel that it would be derogatory to that grandeur and perfection to speak a word in His defence in answer to the false charges brought against Him by His adversaries.

Our Lord's conduct on this occasion does indeed furnish you with much matter for reflection. Behold yourself in this mirror and you will to your grief be compelled to acknowledge that under similar circumstances you have acted very differently.

2d. Consider that Jesus keeps silence out of love for us. It would have been easy for Him with a few words to satisfy one so vain and superficial as Herod, and had He worked a miracle He would have gained not only the favor of the monarch but the applause of his whole court, and would have been set at liberty. Our Lord did not choose to do that. It was His will to suffer, it was His will to endure derision and contumely, it was His will to be condemned to death in order to convert our shame into glory, to preserve us from everlasting disgrace. Ponder this seriously, my soul; Jesus despairs to obtain exemption from the suffering and shame He endures for our sake by means of a miracle, and you expect Almighty God to work a miracle, or at least to send you supernatural and swift relief, whenever scorn or derision falls to your lot. No, my soul, behold your Lord bearing contempt and mockery in silence out of love for you, and learn in future to bear trials of this nature in silence out of love for Him.

3d. Consider that our Lord keeps silence as an example

for us. By keeping silence He desired to inculcate upon His disciples, and especially upon those who by embracing the sacerdotal or Religious state have pledged themselves to follow Him more nearly and more perfectly, the virtue, the admirable virtue of silence. The Wise Man says truly: "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin" (Prov. x. 19.); and: "A wise man will hold his peace." (Eccles. xx. 7.) St. Ambrose asserts that he had met with many who had transgressed grievously by speaking, but who would have preserved themselves from sin had they kept silence. Wherefore, my soul, learn to-day from our Lord's example to practise anew the virtue of silence. Make a resolution this day and throughout the whole week to observe this spiritual fast in honor of our Saviour who keeps silence for your sake; you will profit much by so doing, and by speaking little out of confession you will have less to say when you next go to confession.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE WHITE ROBE IN WHICH OUR LORD WAS ARRAYED.

To-day, my soul, imagine that you see the Saviour arrayed in the white robe of the fool, dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, accompanied by the rabble with derisive, mocking laughter, since they deem the supposed imbecile to be a legitimate butt for their coarse jests and low ribaldry. Think how the angels must have hidden their faces in sorrow and horror at seeing their Creator treated with such contumely. You, my soul, while you fix your attention on your Lord, clothed in the fool's garment, consider the mystic meaning of that white robe.

1st. The white robe was a token of His innocence. To the outward eye it was a garb of contempt, and such the enemies of our Lord intended it to be when they put it on Him. Yet unwittingly by that white garment they

bore testimony to His innocence. The tribunal of Herod was the second judgment-seat before which they had dragged Him, and as yet not the slightest wrongdoing was proved against Him. Hence He had every right to wear the robe of innocence. And yet that white garment, in the sight of God a sign of innocence, was in the eyes of our Lord's adversaries an object of contempt. Herein lies a lesson which you, my soul, will do well to lay to heart. In every age the sacred garb of innocence has been regarded with scorn by the world. He who desires to walk before God with a clean heart must at all times encounter the contempt and scorn of the world. Now because the white robe of innocence is at the same time a fool's garment, many have thrown it off; for alas! not all—and you perhaps are among the number—can persuade themselves to submit to be dragged as Jesus was through the streets, an object of contempt to the populace.

2d. The white robe was a token of our pardon. In olden times the custom prevailed of giving one's vote for or against an accused person by means of white and black stones. The black signified his guilt, the white on the contrary his innocence, and acquitted him of the crime for which he was to be punished. How gladly we behold the white color of the robe upon our Lord's shoulders! To me it is indeed a joyful sight; He bears the weight of my sins, it is they which brought Him before the judgment-seat, and now for my consolation I see the white robe which announces to me that for His sake I am pardoned and set free. The first time that this was accomplished was in holy baptism, when my soul was arrayed in the white robe our Lord purchased for me; the second time was when I took my vows, and received it spiritually. Reflect therefore to-day in all seriousness what means will be most efficacious, how you had better apply yourself to keep this white garment clean from every stain, for only by so doing can you hope that it will be for you an earnest of future glory.

3d. The white robe was a token of our Lord's celestial glory, and see that it is the same for you. In His trans-

figuration upon Mount Thabor His raiment became white and glistening, and St. John in his vision saw all the elect souls who followed the immaculate Lamb in the realms of celestial glory clothed in white robes. Observe this attentively: It was to obtain this robe of glory for us hereafter that our Lord passed through the streets of Jerusalem in a robe which in the eyes of the populace was one of ignominy and folly. God grant that He may not have made that painful journey in vain for you! Wherefore let it be your delight here on earth to wear the garb of the Priest, the rough habit of the monk, contemned as it is by the world, irksome as it may sometimes prove to human nature. For if you do but take heed that this dress—in the eyes of the world foolishness—is in the sight of God a mark of innocence, at any rate of innocence gained by penance, then be assured that out of that robe which will moulder in the grave with your mortal remains, the angels will weave for you the spotless robe of heavenly glory, and for your short passage as an object of contempt through the streets of the earthly Jerusalem you will receive rich compensation on high in the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE RELEASE OF BARABBAS.

Realize to-day, my soul, to the best of your ability, the striking contrasts presented by the scene in the history of our Lord's Passion when He is placed in opposition to Barabbas. Pilate again had found no fault in our Lord, and consequently he resorts to what appears to him a sure method of setting the innocent Prisoner free. He places Him beside a murderer, and then appeals to the people, saying: "Whether will you of the two to be released unto you?" (St. Matt. xxvii. 21.) Picture to yourself the Saviour standing there, holy, innocent, adorable, the Benefactor of the Jewish people, who fed them in the

desert, who healed their sick in towns and villages, and beside Him a sinister-looking criminal as unlike Him as darkness is to light, one on whose brow vice is plainly written, on whose soul rests a heavy load of guilt; yet the deluded populace give the preference to this infamous wretch rather than to the Holy One of Israel! This is indeed a strange, a sorrowful sight!

1st. Consider how innocence is forsaken. See how Barabbas, a man notorious for his crimes, finds many partisans, nay, a whole nation clamors for his release, whereas Jesus, the Source of life in contrast to this murderer, the Mirror of sanctity in contrast to this villain, the Benefactor of the people in contrast to this outrager of the public safety, Jesus stands alone; not a single voice is raised to befriend Him; on the contrary a thousand voices cry: "Let Him be crucified." Well indeed may St. Augustine exclaim: "O fools, what is it that you demand? It is nothing else but that He who raised the dead to life should Himself be slain, and he who destroyed the living should have his life spared to him." Reflect, my soul, upon this truth, that in the world innocence most frequently stands alone, forsaken by all; and ask yourself whether you have not sometimes abandoned your fellow man when he was reviled by the tongue of slander, persecuted by the hand of envy and malice; whether under such circumstances you have not left him helpless, without speaking a word in his defence, or endeavoring to console him.

2d. Consider how inconstant men are. Only a few days previously the very same multitude were almost frantic with exultation, intoxicated with delight and rapture in accompanying with hosannas "Him that cometh in the name of the Lord;" in fact only a little more was wanting and they would have taken Him and made Him their king by acclamation, in preference to all others. Now, a few days later, the mere sight of the self-same Individual excites them to an indescribable fury of hatred and anger, and they give Him the last and lowest place, preferring a common murderer to Him. Let this be a warning to

you, O Christian. Do not be too much concerned as to whether you are praised or blamed, blest or curst by your fellow men. For if they behaved in so false and fickle a manner in regard to your Lord and Master, how can you, His servant and disciple, expect better treatment at their hands? Men are unstable and their judgments are only too unreliable. Wherefore do not dread the criticism, do not pay too much heed to the opinion of a man who to-day is and to-morrow is no more, but fear God, who ever remains unchangeable. Barabbas, acquitted by the popular voice, was not acquitted by God, and our Lord, condemned and sentenced to death by the fickle mob, was justified in the sight of God. As an example to you see how a few days ago He was as indifferent to and unmoved by the acclamations of the people as He now is by the hatred they evince toward Him.

3d. Consider how often you commit the same sin of which the deluded Jewish people were guilty. Every temptation to sin is nothing more or less than the question put to you, whether you value more highly Christ or Barabbas, the Creator or the creature; whether you give the preference to the will of the Most High or the sinful propensities of your fallen nature. And as often as you yield to the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil, you cry with the Jews: "Away with this Man! Away with Christ, away with His grace, away with His law; set free the passions that law restrains; release the murderer of my soul, the robber that deprives me of my eternal felicity." What a terrible, appalling cry! Alas! how often is it heard from your lips?

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE THREEFOLD TORTURE OF SCOURGING.

Represent to yourself to-day, with feelings of heartfelt compassion and profound contrition, the awful spectacle of our Lord's scourging. Brutal executioners, the glint

of whose cold, steely eyes bespeaks them to be destitute of the ordinary sentiments of humanity, and who have been known to take a savage delight in beating unfortunate criminals to death, lay hold on the immaculate Saviour and lead Him to the pillar of scourging. Quivering and trembling in every limb, delivered up to the coarsest and lowest of mankind, without protection, without help of any kind, Jesus stands there, a sacrificial Victim, at the mercy of His barbarous executioners, who, when He has clasped His arms around the pillar, tear the clothes off His tender body and bind Him fast.

1st. Consider the torture thus inflicted on the chaste and modest Saviour. He, the Holy of Holies, stands in the nakedness of His human nature at the pillar where criminals are chastised, defenceless in the hands of the rough, coarse men, who give free play to the cruelty of their nature, and whose filthy language and ribald mockery wound His pure heart more deeply than the stripes of their scourges wound His delicate body. O see, my soul, how painfully our Lord has to expiate in this lonesome hall of scourging the sin and shame of those who, in what the Apostle calls "chambering and impurities," degrade and debase the image of God in themselves; see how painfully He has here to atone for the torture inflicted on His sanctity, His modesty, for the shamelessness of the unhappy sinner, and perhaps for the sins you have committed in this respect.

2d. Consider the torture which the tender body of our Lord had to endure. "The wicked have wrought upon My back; they have lengthened their iniquity." Literally indeed were these words of the Psalmist accomplished in the person of the persecuted Redeemer. He starts and writhes like a worm under the brutal blows of the executioners. The blows fall in quick succession. Already His tender body is black and blue, crimsoned with blood, covered with weals. His sacred blood trickles down to the ground. Our Lord quivers and trembles under the intense agony caused by the blows, but His tormentors do not grow weary. Now they belabor Him afresh with

scourges of leather set with knobs and spikes of iron, striking Him with such violence that the skin of His sacred body is torn, His flesh is seamed with wounds from which the blood spurts forth on all around; even the arms of the executioners are besprinkled with it. He turns His eyes, suffused with blood, on His merciless torturers, entreating them to have pity on Him; but in vain, they only go on with greater fury than ever. See, my soul, how bitter is the atonement which Jesus, bending beneath the awful physical pain of the scourging, has to make for the voluptuousness, the sensual indulgence wherewith sinners flatter their bodies. You perhaps have also sinned in this manner.

3d. Consider how this twofold martyrdom was accentuated by the biting mockery and contempt which the executioners heaped upon Him for His greater torture. See how your persecuted Lord, when the scourging was ended, lies on the ground naked and bleeding, exhausted and bruised like a worm that has been trodden on, with difficulty gathering together His clothes, to cover Himself, and trying to gain a brief respite, that He may recover Himself a little. But no, not even a breathing space, a moment of comparative repose after the terrible torture, is granted Him. Though there is not a spot left upon His sacred body on which to inflict fresh torture, they can at least torment His soul. Now that cruel mockery of our Lord begins when His persecutors throw a rough scarlet robe round His lacerated body and torture Him by hypocritical genuflections whom they dare no longer to trample upon physically, lest they cause His death. This Jesus also endures in expiation of the sins of the voluptuous. When you see man, who was destined to be lord of creation, whom God so ennobled, prostituting his kingly dignity by the indulgence of degrading sensuality, and making the image of God within him the sport of the devil, know that this shameful act was expiated in this painful manner by the Redeemer when He was scourged and set at naught and mocked with regal ceremony. From henceforth, my soul, practise

corporal and spiritual scourging with this threefold object, for yourself and for unhappy sinners; and let it not trouble you if the world despises and derides you for this physical and spiritual discipline. For if our Lord met with nothing but scoffing and contempt as the recompense of the painful scourging which He underwent to atone for our luxury, you can expect nothing better for the works of penance and impetration which you as a Priest and a Religious, voluntarily perform on behalf of a miserable, sinful world.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Contemplate the pleasing picture presented to our view in to-day's Gospel. In the tranquil eventide, before the last rays of the sun have ceased to illuminate the landscape, thousands of expectant persons may be seen seated on the green grass; they are hungry, and anxiously awaiting the refreshment promised them. Before them our Lord stands, an indescribably majestic and dignified figure; He blesses the loaves and fishes and the apostles distribute them, but the number of loaves is not diminished, the fishes do not come to an end; thousands eat as much as they want, and yet some of the provisions are left over. O wonder of wonders! Yet, my soul, this miracle which appears so amazing does but foreshadow a yet greater miracle, that which our Lord has wrought and which He continually works in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

1st. In the desert our Lord looked up to Heaven, gave thanks, blessed the bread and broke it, and He did exactly the same at the Last Supper in the cenacle at Jerusalem. And as He fed five thousand in the desert with the bread which He had broken, so now He feeds all the millions of communicants who approach the holy table, with His body that was broken for us, concealed under the appearance

of bread; and sustains the spiritual life of all those who are journeying through the wilderness of this mortal life, not for the space of forty years, as was the case with the Israelites who eat the manna, but for all eternity. And as in the desert after the five thousand had fully satisfied their appetites, so little of the bread appeared to have been eaten that enough remained over to fill twelve baskets, so the body of the Lord, given for the spiritual sustenance of the faithful, is neither consumed nor diminished; as the Church sings: *Sumit unus, sumunt mille, Quantum isti, tantum ille, Nec sumptus consumitur.* And shall you, my soul, show yourself to be less thankful for this supernatural food than the five thousand in the desert were for the material food? In their delighted gratitude they wanted to make their Benefactor their king.

2d. Consider further, to what extent the miracle brought before our notice to-day is a type of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. As out there in the desert our Lord only employed the apostles to distribute the bread to the people, so He only entrusted the power, the right to consecrate the sacred elements and distribute the bread after transubstantiation to His apostles and the priests their successors. And as in the miraculous multiplication of the loaves the wonder which commenced when the bread was in the Saviour's hands,—the power of multiplication which He communicated to it by virtue of His blessing—did not cease when it was in the hands of the apostles who distributed it, for they went on dispensing the loaves they received from Christ's hand until all the vast multitude had eaten as much as they desired, so it is in regard to the Blessed Sacrament. The miracle our Lord initiated at the Last Supper was carried on by His apostles, and even to this day the Bread of Life is dispensed by their successors to the faithful until all have eaten and are satisfied. And if it be asked why our Lord performed the same miracle in the case of the two fishes as in that of the five loaves, let it be remembered that in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar the faithful feed in a mystic manner on Christ, whom the early Christians loved to

depict under the symbol of a fish. Moreover the fishes, being two in number, may be taken as indicating the two-fold nature of Christ, whom we receive in Holy Communion, both God and man. Wherefore admire, my soul, the beautiful connection between the material and the spiritual miraculous multiplication of bread, and let it serve for the confirmation of your faith.

3d. Consider how we gather from the narrative of the Evangelists that the multitude who followed our Lord into the wilderness was composed of various classes of persons. Some were sick and desired to receive from Christ not merely bread, but the gift of bodily health; others were concerned for their salvation and craved from our Lord not the bread of the body alone but the food of the soul, His divine truth. Others again came to our Lord merely out of curiosity, they were actuated by purely earthly motives, and as soon as their curiosity was satisfied they went away. Here, also, my soul, you see a type of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Some there are who approach the holy table, who draw nigh to Christ, who are sinners, poor but penitent sinners; these are the spiritually sick, who need the Bread of Heaven as a medicine and remedy for the malady of their soul; and there also come others who are earnestly desirous to be saved, whose feet are in the path of perfection, whose heart longs with a pure and fervent longing, unalloyed by any secondary motive, for the Bread of Angels. There are yet others who come, who are entirely immersed in material interests; without any higher aspirations or nobler aims they come simply from habit or compulsion; these go just as they came; nay, they go away in worse plight than they came. In which of these three classes are you to be found? Ask yourself this question seriously, and pray God that all who receive Holy Communion this Easter may leave the Lord's table with their souls satisfied, strengthened by the food which endures unto life eternal.

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE CROWNING WITH THORNS.

To-day, my soul, in sorrow of spirit place before you that sad scene in our Lord's Passion of which the Church reminds us in the third sorrowful mystery of the Rosary: the crowning with thorns. The soldiers and servants of the high priest drag our Lord, who has not yet recovered from the terribly painful scourging, on to a seat; then they place the cruel crown of thorns upon His head and drive the sharp spikes deep into His sacred temples, causing Him exquisite anguish. Look, my soul, at this picture of misery! There sits Jesus, tormented with burning thirst in consequence of the loss of blood He has sustained, still quivering from the force of the blows inflicted on Him, His flesh torn and mangled, His parched lips open, moistened only by the drops of blood slowly trickling down from His thorn-crowned brow, faint and exhausted, panting for breath.

1st. Consider that in common with all the pains our Lord endured, the crowning with thorns had in the first place an intercessory virtue. Man is in his rightful character a king, the lord of creation. But his claim to kingly dignity has become a mockery, a caricature because of sin, which made him, who is the lord of nature, its slave. It is on account of this that our Lord, the great Mediator of humanity, now figures in the character of a king whose royal majesty is but a jest and a mockery, whose diadem is an ignominious crown of thorns. In this character He pleads for mercy with His heavenly Father and seeks to move His divine heart to compassion on behalf of man, who has fallen into such deep degradation. Ponder this seriously, my soul, ponder it with grief; think how utterly you have fallen from your regal dignity; think what powerful intercession, what painful atonement is needed to regain for you the celestial crown which you have lost.

Learn also of Jesus to intercede for your unhappy fellow men, and pre-eminently to be diligent in the more painful intercession consisting in mortification and self-denial.

2d. Consider that in common with all the sufferings our Lord endured, the crowning with thorns had an expiatory virtue. The thorns were not pressed into His temples merely in mockery, but to cause Him injury and pain. Think, my soul, if a single thorn which has run into your foot will cause you a sleepless night, what terrible pain must result from a crown composed entirely of sharp thorns pressed down upon the head! Thus grievously Jesus had to atone for the pride wherewith men place glittering crowns of gold upon their head, thus bitterly He had to expiate the laudatory speeches, the flatteries, the distinctions we covet so eagerly, and accept with such delight. O my soul, if ever you feel within you a tendency to pride and vanity, turn your thoughts immediately to your thorn-crowned Saviour; think of the painful atonement He made for your pride, and it is to be hoped that you will refrain from weaving a fresh crown of thorns for His aching, bleeding brow, by indulging a spirit of arrogance.

3d. Consider that in common with all His other suffering, our Lord's crowning with thorns is an example for our encouragement. It may well be that life often appears to you hard and difficult, your state in life sad and dreary, the burden of suffering may seem to weigh upon you too heavily; but would you have your head crowned with roses when that of our Lord is pierced with thorns? In the hour of pusillanimity, of impatience, look into this mirror. Look upon the sacred countenance of your Lord; observe the profound sorrow that characterizes it. The treachery of Judas, the fall of Peter have already graven lines of inexpressible grief on those sacred features; the agony on Mount Olivet, the exhaustion produced by the terrible scourging have left their disfiguring traces on that countenance whereon the angels delight to gaze. Now it is yet more frightfully defaced by the unspeakable torture caused by the thorns, the burning pain in that sacred head. In

the sight of suffering so acute, can you, my soul, murmur and complain? Do you not rather feel yourself urged to exclaim with one of the saintly daughters of St. Francis: "More suffering, O Lord, more suffering!"

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH OUR LORD WAS MOCKED.

In spirit contemplate your Lord sitting in the hall of scourging, forlorn and suffering, His head crowned with thorns, His lacerated body wrapped in a ragged scarlet robe, in His hand a thick reed. There He sits motionless, patiently enduring the derision and mockery of the soldiers, who bending the knee before Him put out their tongues at Him, and with contemptuous laughter spit in His face and with cruel mockery cry out: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Keep this sad scene before your eyes while you make your meditation.

1st. The ceremonial which is observed as a mark of respect to an earthly king is now perverted into a means of mockery for the heavenly King. In order to do honor to an earthly monarch, his subjects place a crown of gold upon his head, whereas to show their contempt for the King of Heaven they crown Him with sharp thorns. The earthly monarch is arrayed in a splendid mantle of purple dye, whereas a torn and tattered robe is hung round the shoulders of the King of Heaven. The earthly monarch wields a golden sceptre to add to his regal pomp and dignity, while his vassals reverently bow before him, whereas the heavenly King, become an object of contempt to His subjects, holds a bulrush in His royal hands. O Jesus, how art Thou persecuted! How different was the veneration, the adoration paid to Thee in Heaven, the Heaven Thou didst leave for love of us! There millions of angels worshipped Thee as their God and their King; here a handful of impious ruffians set Thee at naught. There

thousands of voices joined to raise the song of praise, the glad hosannas, the just meed of a true and lawful King; here Thou art scorned and despised as a false pretender. How tremendous is the guilt of those who treat Thee thus! Yet, my soul, have you not often joined with those who mocked our Lord? Has not your worship of Him been a mere pretence, your outward show of reverence false and hypocritical, a mockery in fact, if, when you folded your hands and bent your knees in prayer, when you bowed your head at holy Mass, your thoughts were elsewhere? Sometimes, perhaps, while in body you were present before the Lord's table, in spirit you were seated at your own table; or whilst externally you paid a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, inwardly you betook yourself to the dwellings of men whose company was frivolous, if not reprehensible. Is not that tantamount to mocking God by an empty show of reverence and worship? What contempt and mockery of holy things it would display if a Priest, ere he had time to unvest, were to hurry away from the altar to a drinking-saloon; or if a Religious who had scarcely swallowed the sacred body of Christ were to engage in idle conversation with世俗人, with persons of the other sex. Yet you see by indulging wilful distractions you may in spirit render yourself guilty of this disrespect and contempt of our Lord.

2d. Consider how our Lord's tormentors bow the knee before Him. It is expressly said "the knee," for they do not fall down on both knees as we do when we pray, but in a scornful manner bend one knee only. This irreverence is often shown towards Christ by the votaries of the world, and by worldly-minded Religious. As a rule, in fact, such persons only bend one knee when they pray to God; they pray with half their heart; the other knee they bend before another god, the idol of their own passions, the craving for wealth and honor, the favor of man or sensual gratifications. This is indeed a shocking mockery of Him who said: "No man can serve two masters." (St. Matt. vi. 24.) As in marriage the wife to whom her consort has proved unfaithful regards all the attentions he shows her,

the flattering speeches he makes to her as bitter irony, knowing as she does that the same lips which now speak such fair words to her will ere long be parted to address compliments and flatteries to her rival, so it is only mocking God if at one time we bow down before Him and an hour later pay homage to the idols of our sinful desires. Take heed, my soul, lest you are found amongst the number of these evil-doers, of those who set at naught Christ our Lord.

3d. Consider our Lord's conduct when subjected to this contumely. See amid this profound abasement how singularly His sublime grandeur and divine majesty shines forth in all its transcendent beauty. He sits there in majestic serenity, silently, patiently enduring the insults heaped upon Him, a mute but terrible admonition to His tormentors. Learn of Jesus, my soul, what your behavior ought to be in regard to the contempt and mockery which every good Priest or Religious has to bear, not only on the part of the world, but also of those with whom he lives. Keep silence and endure it; thus you will be a spectacle to angels and to men; to the angels a spectacle of delight, to men one of edification and their own confusion. And to you yourself a scoffing speech addressed to you will, if it be borne with patience, be far more salutary than the highest meed of praise from the lips of man, however well that praise may be deserved.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE ECCE HOMO.

To-day, my soul, place before your eyes and impress deeply upon your mind the pathetic picture of the *Ecce Homo*, which appeals alike to Heaven and earth for compassion. Pilate brings the Saviour forth out of the hall of scourging, displays Him to the Jewish people, and, himself moved to pity, exclaims: “*Ecce Homo*”; “Behold the Man!” as if to say: Is it possible that

you have no mercy for one in so deplorable a condition? Imagine that you are standing among the crowd of Jewish onlookers, and that you see before you the heartrending sight presented by our Lord at this period of His Passion. How overwhelming are the thoughts that crowd in upon you!

1st. Consider Pilate's words: *Ecce Homo*—“Behold the Man!”—for they are addressed to you. Yes, behold Him, look upon this Man. Look upon Him as He stands there, wearing the purple garment, His body torn and mangled, unable to lift up His aching head crowned with thorns and bathed in blood, holding the reed-sceptre in His hands, bound though they still are, the personification of infinite grief and meekness, of sorrow and love, a blood-stained shadow of His former self, presented thus to the angry clamor of the priests and the people, a picture of misery, but yet a mirror in which one must dread to look. Gaze upon it, my soul, and your conscience will tell you what you see there. You will see your vanity, which our Lord expiated by the contempt He endured, your idleness and love of ease, which He expiated by His wounds and blood-shedding, your covetousness which He expiated in nakedness and desolation. And if your cold heart is not moved by the words you hear a pagan exclaim, listen to the voice of Jesus Himself.

2d. Consider that our Lord also addresses to you the same words: *Ecce Homo*. Behold Me in My human nature, who am at the same time your God and your Creator, and think to what a condition My love for you has reduced Me. In My Godhead, in the form of God I was the joy and delight of angels; now for love of you I have taken upon Me the form of a leper, an outcast. Enthroned in Heaven I received the homage of millions of celestial spirits, who cried “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Sabaoth;” now for your sake I stand here bound with cords, spit upon, reviled, like the lowest criminal on the face of the earth. In the realms of bliss, with infinite felicity I ruled over the choirs of cherubim and seraphim; now behold Me, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My

sorrow; behold My bleeding brow, My lacerated members, My eyes suffused with tears of anguish; for love of you I have become this pitiable object, and alas! this I must remain, for your sins will not allow Me to find rest. Can you, my soul, still gaze upon this touching sight, this *Ecce Homo*, without melting your cold, your sin-stained heart by hot tears of contrition?

3d. Consider lastly that our Lord cries to His heavenly Father: *Ecce Homo*—“Behold the Man!” Look down, Eternal Father, look down from heaven above upon Thy Son, in whom Thou art well pleased. Behold the countenance which Thou didst illuminate with a ray of celestial glory upon Mount Thabor, now defiled with blood and spittle; behold My body which then shone resplendent as the midday sun, now become a mass of wounds. Behold, O My Father, the deplorable figure Thy Son presents, standing here wretched and forsaken, crushed under foot as a worm; behold this picture of misery and be moved to compassion by the sight, that for the sake of this one Man Thou mayst have pity on the others, and for the sake of My countenance thus disfigured and defaced Thou mayst in Thy mercy renew the face of the sinful earth. How affecting is this petition which our Lord presents to His heavenly Father accompanied by tears of blood! Rise up, my soul, unite your supplications to those of the divine Intercessor; unite your tears, your sufferings, to His, and offer them to God the Father, beseeching Him that for the sake of this one Man, whom you have to-day been contemplating in His Passion, He will have compassion upon the whole sinful race of mankind.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD'S CONDEMNATION TO DEATH.

To-day, my soul, imagine that you hear the terrible cry which re-echoes through Pilate's judgment-hall: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Thus even the sight of that

personification of suffering and misery, at which the very rocks of Calvary were rent in horror, fails to produce any impression on the hard hearts of the Jews. In fact the sight of our Lord bathed in His blood seems to have the same effect on them as on tigers or hyenas, that of whetting their thirst for blood, so that the clamor of the multitude sounds ever louder in Pilate's ears: "Let Him be crucified!" Hence Jesus forlorn and forsaken stands defenceless in presence of a raging mob, and Pilate weakly yields to the populace by condemning Him to death.

1st. Consider how painful this condemnation was for our Lord. He stands before His own nation, before those whose sick He has healed, whose dead He has raised to life; those whom He fed with material bread and to whom He for the space of three years dispensed the supersubstantial bread of His divine teaching; ever in His intercourse with them He showed Himself most merciful and compassionate, and now, when with tears of blood He implores them to have mercy, to have pity upon Him, their only response is the furious vociferation: "Let Him be crucified." Oh how terribly painful, more painful by far than the seourging, must this ingratitude, this rejection of Him, this unjust condemnation of Him have been for our Saviour! See, my soul, how your Lord paid the penalty of man's pride, paid the bitter penalty, when, in presence of the people that shamefully unjust sentence was passed upon Him. What a different position proud mortals, the great and mighty ones of the earth assume in regard to the common people to that in which our Lord was placed. They have not to listen to a sentence of death, shouts of applause ring in their ears; they are not despised and rejected, they are fawned upon and flattered; garlands and laurel-wreaths are showered by the populace on sinners and transgressors of God's law. Jesus has to expiate the courting of popular favor, the craving for the praise and adulation of men; He has to expiate it with bitter shame and reproach. Should this temptation ever assail you, my soul, especially when preaching to a large audience, think of our Lord's cruel

condemnation; think how He stood a spectacle to the Jews, and heard the verdict sentencing Him to a death of the lowest ignominy.

2d. Consider what our Lord's behavior was when He was condemned to death. What think you, if Jesus, whose wisdom and eloquence attracted universal notice to Him, who could hold the multitude and for the space of three days in the desert could keep them hanging on His lips, had lifted up His voice in the presence of the people and called to mind the benefits they had received from Him; if with burning words and His divine authority He had denounced their ingratitude, can it be doubted that the fickle mob, so easily swayed, would have taken His part and their hatred would have been transformed into enthusiastic devotion? But far from doing anything of the sort He holds His peace and bears the unjust sentence patiently. Had He spoken He would indeed have gained the people for the moment but not made them His for ever, and His death upon the cross, our consolation and salvation, would not have had a place in the history of the world. But through His keeping silence our redemption was effected, and the multitude brought to a sense of guilt and a knowledge of the truth, for we read that the Jews who in the morning were transported with rage and fury, went to their homes in the evening smiting their breasts in compunction, in shame and sorrow. Wherefore if it fall to your lot to be wrongfully judged or unkindly treated, learn of Jesus to endure it patiently and silently until God speaks on your behalf, and all ultimately turns out for your greater good and that of your enemies.

3d. Consider the cause of our Lord's condemnation. Pilate, in passing the unjust sentence, is actuated by fear of man; the Pharisees cry: "Crucify Him!" and the people join in the fatal cry blindly and heedlessly. Ask yourself whenever you judge your Lord unjustly in the person of your neighbor by uncharitable speeches, detraction, etc., is not the motive from which you act human respect that fears to speak in defence of the innocent?

Or is it malice that dips your tongue in venom, or perhaps it may after all be loquacity and love of chattering which so ill-becomes a Priest and Religious and whereby Christian charity is wounded without forethought and almost unconsciously. Beware of this, my soul; to-day make a resolution in honor of your Saviour, who when innocent was unjustly condemned, to abstain from all uncharitable judgments of your neighbor, and above all to dry up the source whence this reprehensible conduct springs.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON OUR LORD TAKING THE HEAVY CROSS UPON HIS SHOULDERS.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to contemplate the scene presented in the second station of the way of the cross. The executioners bring forward the cross which the Jews have prepared long beforehand, and fling it down noisily at our Lord's feet. Now, when He beheld the instrument of death on which He was to expire, when He saw the tree of the cross whereon He was to vanquish the foe who on the tree of paradise in the shape of a serpent had won his victory, in holy rapture He embraced that cross, the altar of the New Covenant, and took the heavy burden on His sore and bruised shoulders. Let us consider the character of this burden.

1st. The burden our Lord takes upon His shoulders is an ignominious burden. At that time the cross was considered so opprobrious a thing that no honest man would so much as touch it, and for this reason criminals condemned to be crucified were compelled to carry their cross themselves to the place of execution. Our Lord, numbered amongst the transgressors, reputed amongst the wicked, now takes the cross of infamy upon His shoulders, He the most holy, the most guiltless, He our Lord

and our God. Enter if you can into the full meaning of this awful truth. He by whose hands the heavens and earth are upheld carries the shameful burden of the cross. O wondrous humiliation! Yet out of this very humiliation as great honor proceeded as did shame and ignominy out of the pride of man at the foot of the tree of paradise.

2d. Consider that it is a sign of victory, this burden which our Lord takes upon His shoulders. We know that many a man has loaded his gun with the intention of shooting his enemy, and through carelessness or in too hot haste for vengeance has fired off the fatal shot to his own injury; and in the same way Satan fashioned a cross of wood in order to put Jesus to death, never anticipating that he was manufacturing the very weapon whereby an ignominious defeat would be inflicted on him. This is no evil-doer whom we see, who is taking the cross of shame upon His shoulders; it is a victorious Warrior carrying the weapon wherewith He will lay His hellish foe low. O sacred cross! on our Lord's shoulders thou hast become a sharp-cutting sword wherewith the second David will cut off Goliath's head. Wherefore, my soul, do not be ashamed of bearing the cross which is in the eyes of the world a sore disgrace, for in reality it is an all-conquering weapon, by means of which you can vanquish all the enemies of your salvation.

3d. Consider the joy wherewith our Lord takes the cross upon His shoulders. Now the time has come to do the will of the Father, to accomplish the task of His earthly career, to fulfil the eternal counsels of the Most High. This thought sustains our Lord; it renders Him oblivious of fatigue, of pain. We can imagine the same words which the great Apostle St. Andrew uttered at a later period, now coming from the lips of his divine Master. "Hail, precious cross!" He joyfully cries, "how long I have desired thee! On thee I will lay My weary head, for I have chosen thee as the place of My rest. I will bedew thee with My blood, and thus give thee a value above gold and precious stones. On thee I will expiate the sin Adam committed through the tree, therefore let Me embrace

thee with joy and gladness." O my soul, take up your cross also thus cheerfully, the cross which you took upon your shoulders when you entered the Priesthood, or the Religious state, and willingly accept the special cross which it may please God to lay upon you individually. This cross, bedewed with the tears of calm resignation, is of greater value to you than gold and precious stones. Do not be afraid of carrying it. Everything is difficult at the outset. But that which at first appears hard and bitter, will after a time become so easy and so sweet, that for nothing in the world would you give up the cross which in the beginning seemed so heavy; on the contrary you will rather say with one of the saints of God: Do not take from me, O my God, the cross which Thou hast laid upon my shoulders. And if you find your own cross a light and easy burden, then pray for others, who deem it a weight beyond their strength, and carry your cross with the intention of helping them.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

Accompany in spirit your persecuted Lord as He toils along the hard and difficult way of the cross. The mournful procession is preceded by a trumpeter, who at the corner of every street sounds his trumpet and gives notice of the execution which is to take place. A few paces behind him come a crowd of servants, soldiers, and vagabonds, carrying ropes, nails and tools of different kinds in baskets. Then follow the haughty Pharisees, exultant, intoxicated with the victory they have gained, and lastly our Lord comes with His heavy cross.

1st. Consider what a painful journey this is for our Lord. Bent and tottering, lacerated by the scourging, bruised and beaten and wearied out He staggers along; since the Last Supper He has not had a morsel of food,

not a drop of water has moistened His parched lips since He drank of the brook in the way. Deprived of sleep, subjected to continual maltreatment, exhausted with loss of blood, with the pain of His wounds, with fever and thirst, with grief and woe unutterable He walks barefoot along the stony road, the sun beating hotly upon His thorn-crowned head, so that drops of perspiration mingle with the blood that trickles from His brow. Can you, my soul, with such a spectacle before you as this most painful way of the cross affords, murmur and complain of the hardships, incomparably less as they indeed are, of your life's journey? Is it possible that you go so far as to show annoyance if your calling, if obedience requires you to go out on a dark night, in cold inclement weather, to a rough and lonely part of the country? Learn of Jesus to be more patient, and with this aim look upon Him as your model.

2d. Consider the patience our Lord exhibited on the way of the cross. We have read the touching story of the youthful Isaac, how the patriarch Abraham with a heavy heart laid on the shoulders of his only, his dearly loved child the wood on which he was to be sacrificed, and how the boy, patient, uncomplaining as an innocent lamb, ascended Mount Moria with his burden. To-day we contemplate another, a second Isaac climbing that same mountain. No affectionate father walks beside Him; fierce wolves, hungry dogs encompass the immaculate Lamb of God. Nor is this a mere trial of faith, as it was in Isaac's case; it is real, terrible earnest. But the Son of God carries the wood for His own oblation as patiently as the child of Abraham did. The hands that grasp the cross are, it is true, sore and swollen; the countenance of Him who bears it is wet, not with sweat alone, but with streams of blood; the weight of the ponderous beams composing the instrument of torture press heavily upon His aching, smarting shoulder; over and above all this, contempt and malice meet Him on every side. Although thus tortured, in such misery, yet of His great love His lips move in prayer; He prays for His enemies; He is willing to forgive

and to suffer yet more. Blush to think of your impatience, your spitefulness, your desire for revenge. See how your sins form a part of the burden of guilt beneath which the afflicted Saviour groans, and which causes Him to stumble on the way.

3d. Consider our Lord's painful fall. The way He is traversing is not smooth; great stones lie on the road. Our Lord, overcome by weakness, is unable to go any further. The executioners drag Him onward, and pull ruthlessly at the ropes which bind their exhausted Victim, sinking beneath the burden of the cross. From beneath that terrible, roughly-plaited crown of thorns He turns on them His sunken eyes, suffused with blood, with a look of entreaty, imploring compassion, but in vain. The harried, goaded Lamb must press onward; now His foot strikes against a stone, His knees give way, He totters and falls, and the heavy cross falls on Him. Behold our Lord grovelling on the ground like a worm, overwhelmed with pain and woe and bitter grief!

Weep, my soul, over your falls into sin, which prepare this painful fall for Jesus; weep especially on account of your first fall, and resolve to-day and on the Friday of every week, in honor of our Lord's first fall, to pray for all who are in danger of falling for the first time into mortal sin, for if we fall into mortal sin we cause our Lord to experience far greater pain than that which was inflicted by His own fall on the way of the cross.

PASSION SUNDAY.

ON OBDURACY OF HEART.

To-day's Gospel presents Christ to us in His indescribable grandeur. Calm, composed, majestic, He stands among the angry, excited Jews and utters those sublime words: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" (St. John viii. 46.) Never since the world was made has any one dared to speak thus, and not one of all the human be-

ings who have inhabited the earth could assert himself to be without sin, as Jesus did. Realize to yourself how great, how imposing He was at the moment that He thus spoke, and then see how the Jews took up stones to cast at Him, to kill Him, the model of perfection, the mirror of holiness. His sanctity makes no more impression on them than did His teaching and His miracles, commanding as it should respect and reverence. What terrible hardness of heart they manifested!

1st. Consider what a deplorable condition this state of obduracy is. As a flower unfolds her petals as soon as the sun appears, and turns towards the rising luminary, because without the light and warmth of the sun no plant can live, much less produce fair blossoms, so our souls cannot live without the spiritual Sun, without Christ and His grace. Whenever we commit a mortal sin it is as if a coating of ice forms over our heart, beneath which our spiritual life grows numb and gradually dies out. But so long as we do not withdraw ourselves entirely from the influence of the Sun of divine grace, if we do but return to it with penitence and penance, then that Sun of grace is powerful enough to melt the glacial covering and infuse fresh life into the frozen soul. But woe betide those who fall into the state of obduracy in which to-day's Gospel shows the Jews to have been! It is as if a man voluntarily returned to and took up his abode in the regions of eternal snow and ice, whither no ray of sunshine can penetrate, so that everlasting numbness and eternal death must be his sad portion. Souls who are thus impenitent, souls created by God and for God, are irretrievably lost, for to them may be applied the words of Holy Writ: "They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not." (Ps. cxiii. 13.)

2d. Consider this truth as we see it exemplified in that living impersonification of obduracy, King Pharao. He did not believe in the true God although he continually saw with his own eyes the effects of His power and majesty. See how that monarch resisted conviction, how he struggled to the death against the influence of divine grace. God caused the most wonderful and striking miracles to

be worked by Moses; He sent ten plagues upon the land of Egypt one after another, one more terrible than another, but Pharaoh remained obdurate till at length the divine judgment overtook him himself, and he perished in the waters of the Red Sea. Behold in him a type of all those unhappy persons whom neither the greatest miracles nor the most terrible chastisements avail to convert; those adversaries of the Church whose animosity is only intensified the more signal are the proofs God gives of the protecting care He extends over His Church; those who mock at religion and persistently close their eyes, like the Jews in the Gospel, to the series of incontrovertible marvels whereby Christian Faith has been upheld during nineteen centuries. And since these hardened sinners cannot deny the obvious truth, they take up stones to cast at Christ, at His Church, at His servants. But our Lord hides Himself from them, as we read in the Gospel that He did; He departs and does not manifest Himself to them again until —O appalling thought!—they appear before His judgment-seat. My soul, pray for these deluded individuals; they are your brethren, possibly members of the flock committed to your charge, your relatives perhaps. Offer your penances for them, that God may have mercy upon them; but see that you do this in a spirit of humility.

3d. Consider that no one is secure against falling into this awful state. Cain was brother to Abel, the special object of divine love, yet his heart was hardened. King Saul was the elect of God, chosen out of the thousands of Israel, anointed by the divinely commissioned prophet, yet he lapsed into a state of obduracy. Judas was even an apostle, he lived in the enjoyment of intimate intercourse with our Lord, yet he ended in impenitence. Ponder this attentively: One single sin concealed in confession, one single Mass celebrated in mortal sin, one obstinate refusal to listen to the gentle rebuke of your Superior, or the loving admonition of one of your fellow Religious, may lead you on to the path which ends in the Red Sea of final impenitence. Ought not this thought to alarm you? It ought at least to be a warning to you to make a good

and faithful use of the many graces which are daily placed within your reach in the sacerdotal and Religious state; for every time that you receive one such grace, it is as if our Lord stood before you, as He is represented as doing in to-day's Gospel, full of mercy and compassion. If you carelessly turn a deaf ear to Him, if you neglect to use those graces He offers you, and He departs from you, who can tell whether He will ever return? And if He returns no more—then alas! O my soul, you will fall into the deplorable condition exemplified in the case of Saul and Pharao.

MONDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE FOURTH STATION OF THE CROSS.

To-day, my soul, contemplate the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of Dolors, on the day on which her Son is to be put to death. Think what is the anguish she suffers when the concourse of the populace, the blast of the trumpet, the cavalcade of soldiers announce to her that He has entered upon the blood-stained way of the cross. Imagine as far as you can the painful perplexity of her soul, as she debates within herself whether she shall retire to a solitary spot to indulge her grief and weep unrestrainedly, or whether she shall nerve herself to follow her Son on the way of the cross. Love urges her to take the latter course, and love triumphs over grief.

1st. Consider that Mary, accompanied by John, follows Jesus on the way to Calvary. Oh behold that tender Mother, behold her traversing with trembling, tottering steps the streets that lead to the *via dolorosa*, the sorrowful way of the cross! How great the anguish, the horror that she felt! She already hears the uproar, the clamorous cries of the approaching multitude, already the notes of the trumpet fall on her ear and pierce her heart. Ought she really to go onward? Will she be able to bear it? Will she not be overcome with grief at the sight of her

Son, bruised and bleeding? Will it not be too much for her to endure the contempt and mockery, the insolent stare of the executioners, of the jealous Pharisees, who consider themselves at liberty to be as rude as they please to the mother of a condemned criminal? Such are the painful thoughts that crowd into Mary's mind; but love, the affection that stimulates her, proves more powerful than these sad anticipations, and she follows her divine Son on the way of the cross. If, my soul, you have hitherto followed your Lord on His sorrowful way rarely, reluctantly, the reason of this is to be found in your want of love; you have loved yourself too much and Him too little, therefore you could not bring yourself to encounter the shame, the scorn, the bitterness which await all who walk with Mary in the dolorous way of the cross.

2d. Consider how Mary met Jesus on the way to Calvary. Look attentively at the affecting picture this meeting presents: Mary, broken down with grief, leans against one of the posts of the gate through which the oncoming crowd will pass. Pale as a corpse, her hands tightly clasped together, she looks anxiously in the direction in which our Lord is coming, eager to catch sight of Him. He is approaching now, her divine Son, staggering under the weight of the cross, wearing the terrible crown of thorns, His countenance covered with sweat and blood, bearing evident traces of deadly exhaustion. His blessed Mother no longer sees the soldiers, she no longer sees the executioners; in her all-absorbing sorrow, her intense affection, she is blind to all except one form only—that of her afflicted, tortured Son. Wringing her hands in anguish, she presses through the guard who surround the divine Victim, she sinks down before Him, dissolved in sorrow, love and adoration. Their eyes meet, they exchange a look of mutual love and compassion. Some of the soldiers are touched by this sight; but the others, abusing both the Mother and the Son, drive our Lord forwards, roughly thrusting His Mother aside. You act thus cruelly towards our blessed Lady when you are wilfully indifferent to the Saviour's Passion, when you add to His

sufferings by your sins. Oh do not be one of His brutal tormentors, but rather cast yourself down before Him as Mary did when you behold Him carrying the cross; bewail your misdeeds with heartfelt contrition, and make a firm resolution of amendment.

3d. Consider that the anguish Mary experienced at this meeting was unexampled in its intensity. When Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his dearly loved son Isaac, he took care to prevent Sara, the boy's mother, from knowing anything about it; he said not a word and thus spared his wife the terrible affliction, the heartrending grief that would have overwhelmed her. When Jacob in profound sorrow rent his garments and cried aloud in his woe, so as to melt a very heart of stone, because Joseph, his son, had, as he imagined, been torn in pieces by a beast of prey, Rachel, the doting mother, had already been taken out of this world, God having thus spared her that terrible trial. Mary, however, the Mother of the Son of God, was not destined to be exempted from the greatest, the most poignant anguish which a mother's heart is capable of feeling; she had to behold her divine Son dragged to execution before her eyes, condemned to death, to the death of a malefactor, to the death of the cross. Who can help pitying this unhappy Mother? What a severe trial is laid on her, and alas! she has to bear this cruel martyrdom alone, quite alone! At the sight of the fortitude displayed by this weak woman, blush with shame, my soul, at your want of courage, your complaints and lamentations, when you encounter something in the duties of your calling which is painful and distressing.

TUESDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE FIFTH STATION OF THE CROSS.

Great indeed must have been the exhaustion, the deadly weariness our Lord suffered, since even the brutal executioners perceived that He had not the power to carry the cross any longer unaided. We are told that they stopped a

man who happened to be passing by, Simon of Cyrene, and compelled him to help the tired Redeemer to carry the heavy burden. Picture to yourself what occurred on that occasion; without making the slightest attempt to conceal his anger and annoyance, Simon reluctantly lays hold on the cross, never suspecting it to be the instrument of his salvation that he is handling. Jesus looks at him so piteously, and thanks him so gratefully for his assistance, compulsory though it is, that the Cyrenean must have been the most hard-hearted of men had not the unwillingness he felt at first been at once overcome.

1st. Consider that it is under compulsion that Simon bears the cross. It was only by chance and against his will that he was seized by the soldiers; at the outset he carried the cross grudgingly, impatiently, but he submits to the part forced upon him, and before long, touched with compassion, he carries the cross willingly and even with a certain measure of joy. Here, my soul, you see represented the three different classes of persons who carry the cross. The first carry the cross of their own individual sufferings, the cross peculiar to their calling, the cross which obedience imposes on them, not merely as a compulsory task, but with impatient complainings, murmuring, and unseemly lamentations. The natural result is that their cross is of no more profit to them than that on which the impenitent thief expired was to him; nay more, it does but accentuate and enhance their guilt. The second class of persons do indeed carry the cross under coercion, but they are patient and do not murmur. They make a virtue of necessity. They would, it is true, prefer that the unwelcome burden should be removed, but since that cannot be, they resign themselves to bear it, they do not complain and thereby they gain a merit. Finally the third class of persons carry the cross laid upon them by God, or by man—a cross consequently taken up not voluntarily but under compulsion—out of compassion, that is out of love to the God who bore His cross for them; they embrace that cross with a certain delight; they regard it as a sweet yoke, and thus they are of all bearers

of the cross the most happy, because they do not find it a grievance, but a source of merit. To which class do you belong, O reader? Do you resemble Simon of Cyrene at the commencement or at the end of the way of the cross?

2d. Consider that Simon was a stranger, a traveller who happened to be on the way to Jerusalem when he was forced to carry the cross. This circumstance, that it was not one of the Jews, but a stranger who chanced to be passing at the time, and was privileged to help his God to carry the cross, is not without a deep signification. Learn from it, my soul, that those who would follow Christ crucified must be strangers and pilgrims on earth, that they must have nothing in common with the evil world, but rather be, like Simon, a traveller, journeying on the road to the heavenly Jerusalem towards which all their thoughts and aspirations should tend. Wherefore if hitherto you have not carried your cross in a right spirit, it is because instead of feeling yourself an alien here below, and yearning after your heavenly country, you have made yourself quite at home in this world, and you have clung with all your heart to its wealth and its pleasures. Handicapped in this way you have not any longer the power to carry our Lord's cross. See then that this very day you make a change for the better.

3d. Consider that in carrying the cross Simon did not go unrewarded. His actual merit was but slight; at first he only helped to carry the cross because he was compelled, and only later on for a very short space did he carry it patiently and willingly. Yet see, for that short space of time his name and that of his sons Rufus and Alexander are immortalized in the Gospels and known throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. Tradition records that both he and his two sons were touched by divine grace and became disciples of Jesus Christ. See how rich is the recompense of those who bear the cross. The *via dolorosa* of our life on earth is short, but it may be the means of causing our names to be inscribed in the book of life. The suffering is short, the joys are eternal! Think of this, whenever the cross of your calling or of

your particular suffering seems too hard to be borne, and while contemplating the reward the Cyrenean received, resolve that you will, in as far as you can, by word and in deed, act the part of Simon of Cyrene towards those of your fellow-men who groan beneath the weight of the cross.

WEDNESDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM WHO WEPT FOR OUR LORD.

“There is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her; all her friends have despised her and have become her enemies.” (Lam. i. 2.) To-day, my soul, while you recall to mind these words of the prophet, imagine that you see our Lord walking with tottering, unsteady steps along the way of the cross; see how His wandering glances look wistfully around, soliciting some sign of compassion, asking if He is not to meet with one pitying soul on His painful way, if His eyes are never to rest on any but scornful, scowling, savage countenances. For a long time Jesus sought in vain for any one who would compassionate Him; at length He encounters some; they are devout women who draw near to Him.

1st. Consider that Veronica approaches the Saviour, handing to Him her veil wherewith to wipe His face, and other pious women also approach who weep for Him. Here contemplate in the first and foremost place the courage displayed by Veronica and the holy women who compassionate our Lord. A weak woman makes her way through the crowd of savage executioners; she ventures to offer a napkin to the despised outcast; she heeds not the angry looks of the Pharisees, the mocking jests of the soldiers; nor do her companions shrink from publicly avowing their sympathy with One who was regarded by all as an object of hatred and aversion. Here, my soul, you see the might, the strength of compassion. Pitying love, the true love of one’s neighbor, hastens first of all to

the way of the cross; it seeks out primarily our suffering brethren and sisters, and abounds in tender sympathy even for those who are rejected and despised by all; for unhappy sinners, malefactors, criminals condemned to death. O my soul, if you cannot help admiring the conduct of these compassionate women, ask yourself if the same pitying charity towards your neighbor urges you also to go out onto the Way of the Cross, to go there where an opportunity is offered of giving assistance, consolation, encouragement to the afflicted; for thus will our Lord's words be fulfilled: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another." (St. John xiii. 35.)

2d. Magdalen is one of the women who show their sympathy with our Lord on the mournful way of the cross. Heartbroken, intoxicated as it were with grief, almost fainting from the excess of her emotion, every moment adding to her anguish, heedless of the jeers and taunts of the executioners and soldiers, she follows the Saviour bearing His cross. As Veronica represents compassionate charity, so Magdalen represents penitent charity on the way of the cross. She is indeed fully conscious of her sins form part of the heavy burden weighing on the tortured Redeemer, that her soul has to answer for part of His unspeakable suffering, and for this reason she feels all the more stimulated to compassionate Him and as far as possible to share in His Passion. My soul, if the pity that stirs your heart urges you to aid others on their *via crucis*, let contrite, penitent love induce you to walk willingly on your own way of the cross; not merely in compunction and penance to meditate upon our Lord's Passion, but to bear a part of it with Him and for Him, by cheerfully practising the penances prescribed by your Rule, required by your calling, and voluntarily performing special acts of mortification. Thus you will not imitate Magdalen only by straying in the path of sin, but in climbing the steep path of Calvary.

3d. The Blessed Virgin Mary is also one of the women who show sympathy with our Lord on the mournful way

of the cross. Grave and resolute, heedless of the curious stare of the gaping populace, from whom her recollected demeanor, her deep sorrow command a certain respect, she follows in the footsteps of her Son. This is the first time the way of the cross is made on earth. It is an act of worship, a silent supplication on Mary's part; her heart shares in Christ's Passion; in spirit she voluntarily, willingly carries His cross both out of love for her Son who suffers and out of love for the sinful world for whom He suffers. Here you see an example of the highest, purest charity, the charity which does not merely weep over and bewail the sufferings of another, as the women of Jerusalem did, which does not content itself with displaying sympathy by free-will offerings, as was the case with Veronica, but which courageously takes suffering upon itself, the practice of voluntary mortifications, of works of penance, and these it does not perform for itself as Magdalene did for herself, but on behalf of others. Learn to-day from the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary to follow our Lord on the way of the cross in atonement for the sins of others, that highest, most perfect act of charity.

THURSDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE TENTH STATION OF THE CROSS.

Contemplate to-day the heartrending picture presented in the tenth station of the cross, when Jesus is stripped of His garments. At last our Lord has reached the summit of Calvary, wearied to death. How glad He would have been to have seated Himself on the hard rock in order to rest a little, to regain His breath and recover Himself somewhat after the arduous exertion of climbing the terrible way of the cross in His exhausted state. But no, there is no more rest for Him here below. The soldiers come up to Him, they tear the cloak off His shoulders, they seize His seamless tunic, they drag it over His

bleeding, thorn-pierced head with jeers and curses. There He stands exposed to view, the Son of man, trembling and helpless.

1st. Consider the physical pain caused by the stripping off of His garments. Contemplate the Saviour of mankind as He stands there shivering, shuddering, the very image of misery, covered with blood and bruises, with wounds some open, others half-dried, with stripes and marks of violence. How cruelly the fierce executioners dragged off His garments, the woollen fabric of which, dried into the sores in some places, is fast bound by the congealed blood to the fresh, deep wound made by the pressure of the heavy cross on His shoulder, a wound which is inexpressibly painful. How excreciating was the torture when, finding they could not easily get His clothes over His head on account of the crown of thorns, they roughly tore it off, tearing open all the wounds anew. Yes, my soul, contemplate Him, contemplate your Lord as He stands before you stripped of His garments, His poor body mangled, lacerated, swollen, with fragments of His clothing still adhering to the places where the blood has dried. Contemplate Him and weep, weep tears of sorrow and of compunction; grieve that Jesus should have to make so awful an atonement for the license wherewith thousands have stained the sacred robe of original innocence.

2d. Consider the mental pain caused by stripping off our Lord's garments. What words can describe the horrible distress and anguish experienced by the chaste, modest Son of God when the executioners tore His clothes off His person in the sight of the multitude? If one meets with mortal men who would rather die than disclose their sufferings to a physician because the nature of the malady leads them to shrink in shame from the exposure, what must it have been to the Son of the immaculate Virgin Mary to be stripped from head to foot, exposed to the gaze of the lowest of the people? Doubtless this was far more bitter to Him than death itself; the very sun, in horror of the ignominy inflicted on its God,

withdrew its light, and cast a veil around the afflicted Saviour to hide His nakedness. Consider, my soul, on your part, why our Lord had to endure this shame; ask yourself whether you by your sins had not a share in stripping Christ of His garments.

3d. Consider how in this tenth station of the cross our Lord expiated Adam's prevarication. He, the second Adam, who had come down from Heaven, stands naked upon Calvary because the first Adam, who sprang from earth, felt on account of his fall from innocence ashamed of his nakedness and hid himself from the face of God. He, the heavenly Noe, the antitype of the earthly Noe, inebriated with the wine of divine charity towards sinners, lies uncovered upon the cross, and Cham, the Hebrew people, in their ingratitude delight to look upon the nakedness of their Father and Benefactor. He, the Son of God, whose are all things, who clothes all His creatures, who can call the Heavens and the earth His own, departs out of this world destitute and naked, as destitute and naked He came into it, in order to win for us the robe of sanctifying grace which we had lost. Whilst you have before you the spectacle of our Lord's poverty, the example of poverty carried to the uttermost limit, renew, my soul, your vow of poverty; resolve to keep it faithfully and nevermore to be ashamed to expose yourself to the world's derision in the poor and lowly habit of your Order, remembering how our Lord endured ignominy incomparably greater in presence of the rude and mocking multitude.

FRIDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.

ON THE SORROWS OF MARY WHEN MOUNT CALVARY WAS REACHED.

Whilst making your meditation on this day, whereon the Church commemorates the seven dolors of the sorrowful Mother of God, fix your eyes upon Mary. See how the sword foretold by Simeon pierced her heart with grief at

the circumcision and the flight into Egypt; how it was plunged more deeply into the soul at the loss of Jesus when He was twelve years old; and at the mournful meeting on the way to Calvary. And now that she has come to Calvary, that sword transfixes afresh her sinless soul. Pale as death she stands there, a faint cry of pain now and again escaping her lips. Who can describe the horror that thrilled through her when she perceived Jesus undergoing the painful process of being stript of His garments, when she saw the terrible nails, the heavy hammer, and caught sight of the cross lying on the ground. Realize to yourself, my soul, what the Blessed Virgin felt at that moment, when Jesus stretched Himself upon the cross for the cruel nails to be driven in, and consider:

1st. The grief wherewith the Mother stood beside the dying-bed of her Son, a grief all the greater in proportion to the magnitude of her love for her dying Son on the one hand, and to the more painful nature of His death on the other. If any earthly mother is dissolved in tears, if her heart is wrung with unspeakable anguish when she sees her son expire, even though perchance in his lifetime that son caused her no slight anxiety and distress, what must the immaculate Mother have experienced when she beheld her Son, her joy and delight, extend Himself on the bed of death, and such a bed! Can we conceive a dying-couch more ignominious, more awful, than that on which Mary now looked?

O Mother of Dolors! the sun cannot bear to gaze upon the death of thy Son; it veils its face in token of mourning, whilst thou, His Mother, art compelled to witness this awful spectacle. And were she to close her eyes, consider:

2d. How the strokes of the merciless hammer would sound in her ears. Each blow that she heard of that hammer opened a fresh wound in her heart. Imagine, my soul, the feelings of a mother whose son has to undergo the amputation of an arm or a foot, though it be as the means of saving his life. She cannot look on at the operation, and every cry of pain that reaches her ear from a distance is like a thorn thrust into her heart. Or picture

to yourself the overwhelming affliction of a father when he hears the coffin nailed down which contains the lifeless body of his only son, and then reflect what the Mother of Jesus must have felt when she heard the groans of her tortured Son, and the strokes of the terrible hammer which fixed Him to the cross whereon He was to suffer an agonizing death. Yes, Mary, thou art indeed a Mother of Dolors; and alas! do you, my soul, remember that you too helped to make her such, for every sin you commit is a blow of that hammer that sounds so sadly in her ears.

3d. Consider how the Son of God, when nailed to the cross, was aware of the profound grief of His afflicted Mother, and although He kept silence outwardly, yet in His heart He spoke to her in this wise: "O My dearest Mother, all the joys thou didst experience on My account are now changed into tribulation, mourning, and woe. I was, it is true, born of thee in poverty and nakedness, in a stable, yet it was granted thee to wrap My tender limbs in swaddling-clothes and thy soul was rejoiced by the angels' song. But now thou beholdest Me naked upon the cross, and mayst not clothe My nakedness, and instead of the angels' song thou hearest nothing but the mockery and blasphemies of My enemies. My seamless robe, fashioned by thy chaste hands, is appropriated by the rude soldiery; My hands, that once clasped thee in the fond embrace of a child, are now transfixed by nails; My countenance, which formerly thou didst cover with kisses, is now defiled with blood, with sweat and spittle. How happily thou didst once live at Nazareth! now on Calvary thou art become indeed a Mother of Sorrows." Ponder upon these words, my soul, and during this day, whenever the hour strikes, call to mind with contrition of spirit the blows of the hammer that struck Jesus' limbs and Mary's heart, inflicting such bitter pain, and make a special resolution to-day to nail to the cross one of the corrupt inclinations of your heart, and thus alleviate the anguish Mary endured for your sake on the Friday of her compassion.

SATURDAY AFTER PASSION SUNDAY.**ON THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD.**

To-day again picture to yourself, my soul, the great, the all-important moment, the moment of most supreme importance that the world ever knew, when Jesus was about to lay Himself down upon the cross, to be immolated upon that altar as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. What a stupendous instant! There stands Jesus before the dreadful cross: Hell looks on in anxious fear, Heaven regards the solemn scene with grave expectancy; both await the action of Jesus, on which consequences of such infinite magnitude depend. Consider:

1st. What were the emotions that thrilled through the Saviour's heart as He gazed upon the instrument of torture, His bed of death that was prepared for Him, the nails, those cruel nails that were to pierce His hands and feet, the hammer, the heavy hammer that was to fasten Him to the cross? Well indeed may His human nature have shrunk shudderingly from so terrible a death; well may burning anguish and pale terror have seized upon His soul at the prospect of such an end. But He knew it to be the will of His heavenly Father, and the Son is obedient, obedient even unto the death of the cross. In this spirit of obedience He lays Himself down upon the cross as a victim, a patient lamb upon the sacrificial altar. Do you remember how when you took your vows, or were consecrated to the Priesthood, prostrate upon the ground you made an oblation of your own will to be crucified, and promised obedience to your Superior? Have you never drawn back from the sacrifice you then made? Will you not be obedient even unto death, like Jesus your Lord?

2d. Consider the unspeakable destitution of the Lamb of God when extended upon the cross. Every one, even the poorest of mankind, can find some couch whereon to lay his head when the hour comes for his last long sleep; at any rate the merciful earth provides him with a pillow.

Jesus had not even that. A beam of wood, a tree of shame is His dying bed, and not even upon that comfortless pillow can He rest His gentle head, without driving in more deeply the thorns that compose His crown. Every one, even the most poverty-stricken, is furnished with a shroud, a covering to be drawn over his limbs as they stiffen in death; judge then how complete is the poverty of Jesus, since He lies on His death-bed naked, stript of His garments; He cannot so much as wipe the death-dews from His brow, for His hands are held fast by nails. Do you ever recall to mind, my soul, how you too once, when you made the sacrifice of yourself to God, pledged yourself to lead a life of poverty, of holy poverty? Have you persevered in holding fast to the cross whereto you nailed the coneupisence of the eyes? have you been as faithful to your vow as was your destitute Lord?

3d. Consider finally, with what brutality the Redeemer is nailed to the sacred cross. Jesus, the very personification of misery, is stretched upon the cross by the executioners; they pull His right arm until His hand reaches the hole made for the nail; one of them holds open the fingers which the pain causes to close involuntarily, another fixes the long, thick nail in its place; the ponderous hammer descends, and a cry of suffering, low and distinct, escapes the lips of the Lord. The arms of the executioners are besprinkled with His blood, the muscles of the hand are horribly torn. And when this hand is nailed fast, and the veins and nerves contract, how mercilessly His tormentors drag the other arm, which will not reach as far as the other hole; how heartbreaking is the wailing sound Jesus utters when the second and the third nail is driven in, till the horrible torture is at length ended. Helpless, bleeding, consumed with pain, the spotless, sinless Victim lies outstretched upon the cross, to make atonement for our sins. O my soul, do you sometimes think how you once, when you received Holy Orders or made your Religious profession, also outstretched upon the ground, offered yourself to God as a pure, a holy victim; how you vowed to observe holy chastity, to live a

pure, a mortified life, renouncing the carnal delights and pleasures of the sinful world, which Jesus, nailed to the cross, expiated with such grievous sufferings? God grant that the strokes of the hammer at the crucifixion of your Lord may not sound in your ear as reproaches, but as an incitement to keep this vow with all fidelity, and daily to crucify anew the concupiscences of the flesh.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE TITLE ON THE CROSS.

Amid enthusiastic acclamations of joy on the part of the populace, who salute Him as King of the Jews, Jesus to-day makes His entry into Jerusalem. A few days later this King of the Jews hangs in the sight of all, pilloried upon the cross, His regal title being the only crime for which He is tortured and put to death. “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” is inscribed in three languages upon the cross. It is related of a well-known Religious, that when upon his death-bed he took the superscription that was on the cross in his hands, fixed his gaze upon it, and thus looking upon it expired. Do you also, my soul, turn your eyes to-day upon that title, and consider:

1st. The word “Jesus.” It is Jesus who hangs upon the cross. Thus involuntarily His enemies bear testimony to Him. The superscription is to be read by every one, and every one may learn from it that this Individual, about whom there is nothing striking, crucified between two malefactors, is Jesus, the Saviour of mankind. Yes, it is as a Saviour, not as a criminal, that He hangs upon the cross, for no crime could be imputed to Him. The first time that this name was given to Him was when His blood was first shed at the circumcision, when He gave a pledge and earnest that later on He would fully merit that title by His death upon the cross; for on the cross He shed His blood to the very last drop, shed it because “He became obedient, even to the death of the cross”; and for

this cause, St. Paul adds, “God also hath exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above all names; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” (Phil. ii. 8.) Consequently the name of Jesus is a glorious title for Him who is crucified, and for us a word full of sweetness—as sweet as it was for the penitent thief, who not only read the superscription, but made experience of its truth, since the Sufferer crucified at his side proved in truth for him a “Saviour.”

2d. Consider the second word of the superscription: “Nazarenus,” the Nazarene. By this Pilate meant to indicate the place whence He came, but unintentionally the Roman governor bore a fresh and glorious witness to the Lord by assigning this title to Him, for the word Nazarene signifies one who is fair and beauteous. But how can Jesus be said to be beauteous, He who is pale and withered like a dried-up flower, who is devoid of all bright color and beauty of form? And yet, my soul, this One who is despised and crucified is a tree rich in fairest blossoms, for He is the tree of life, whose fruit is immortality. Look upon this new tree of life, planted in the paradise of the bitter Passion of your Lord. Its root is the deepest humility, the most holy poverty; the rough bark is the toil and torment that He underwent for our salvation; the branches of the tree are His holy doctrines which He has disseminated throughout the whole world; its beauteous blossoms are His sacred innocence and purity; the height of the tree is His wondrous love, its fruits are the glorious graces which He bestows on us. That tree is watered and rendered fruitful and bright with blossoms this day, when Jesus of Nazareth hangs upon the cross, a lovely flower, white and crimson; white in the ghastly pallor of death, tinged with the crimson of His precious blood.

3d. Consider the final clause of the title: “King of the Jews.” This title was given to Him in mockery, but unwittingly His enemies spoke the truth. For this Crucified One is indeed a king. To all appearances He has no throne but a cross of shame, no palace but the place of execution; His courtiers are two malefactors and His

regal table gall and vinegar. Yet He is in very truth a king, only His kingdom is not of this world. See how gloriously this King reigns from the cross! At the moment on which He expired the rocks were rent, the veil of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom, the dead were called forth from their graves. A far more powerful Ruler than any prince of this world, from the cross He overthrows Satan's kingdom, and establishes the kingdom of God, the limits of which are the boundaries of the earth, and of which the duration is to all eternity. And He is the King of the Jews, not of the carnal descendants of the faithful Abraham, but of the spiritual children of those who are true Judeans, that is confessors; who with the penitent thief confess their sins and by their good works show whose disciples they are. Look to it, my soul, that you are in word and deed a true Judean, a confessor of Jesus Christ, for He is your King; and then you will one day make your solemn entry into the heavenly Jerusalem with Him, Jesus of Nazareth, eternally fair and beauteous above all the sons of men.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

ON THE SEVEN WORDS OF OUR LORD UPON THE CROSS.

To-day take your stand beneath the cross of your Redeemer, and in a spirit of holy recollection fix your eyes on Him, your dying God. The terrible crown of thorns is still upon His head; His countenance is sunk upon His breast; His hair and beard are clotted, His eyes are blinded, His parched, parted lips are crimsoned with blood; His chest, drawn and forcibly extended upon the instrument of torture, heaves painfully as He struggles for breath. The skin, torn in many places, is stretched and strained so tightly through the weight of the body that all His bones can be numbered; His blood falls in streams and bedews the ground. What a pitiable object! Now see, once more this tortured Victim opens His pallid

lips; seven times His voice is heard speaking from the cross. Listen in spirit to the words our Lord utters and consider the following points:

1st. When a celebrated preacher comes to some town it is customary for all good Christians to make a point of attending his discourses. Now never was so eloquent a preacher, so great a teacher seen and heard upon earth as the Son of God. From the cross as from an elevated pulpit He speaks amid intolerable torture, and His words are heard far and wide. Precisely from that pulpit, the last which He ascended, He delivered a most impressive sermon in the last seven words He uttered, whereby salutary doctrine was disseminated throughout the whole world. He delivered that sermon with His dying lips, amid excruciating sufferings, in order that up to His latest breath He might labor for the salvation of souls. Look with admiration at this Teacher speaking from the cross, and rekindle the expiring flame of your zeal at the ardent furnace of His charity.

2d. It is the habit of parents, when their end draws near, to summon their children to their bedside, in order once more to impart to them wise counsels and serious admonitions for the regulation of their whole life. And what is said to the sons and daughters on such solemn occasions is regarded as sacred and for the most part it is taken deeply to heart. Now never was there a father known upon earth who was so loving towards his children as our Lord was towards men. Whilst hanging upon the cross, as from a death-bed—and what a death-bed that cross was!—He once more takes leave of those whom He loves; He gives them His last instructions with His expiring breath. These instructions are contained in the seven last words of Christ upon the cross; ought not you, my soul, to regard them as sacred? ought they not to impress you deeply?

3d. As a dying man in addressing those around him for the last time says all he wishes to say in a few words, epitomizing what in his past life he has urged in detail and at length, and, so to speak, enjoining on his loved

ones the main point, so Jesus did in the seven words spoken from the cross. They are a summary of Christian perfection. Does not the first word: "Father, forgive them," express the highest type of charity? Is not the second word, which He addressed to the penitent thief, an example of consummate compassion? And how could true, loyal affection towards His Mother and His disciples be more perfectly displayed than it was when, despite the languor and faintness of death, He was not forgetful of them, but in the third word which He spoke, with loving solicitude He provided for their future. And when, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, He uttered that cry upon the cross: "I thirst," did He not give us an example of perfect obedience in accomplishing the minutest particulars of what is commanded? Again, observe and admire the perfect humility wherewith He lets it be known that He is forsaken even by His God, although He knows that by this confession He will bring fresh mockery upon Himself. Hear too how in His sixth word: "It is consummated," He testifies to the perfect fulfilment of His mission; and in His seventh and last word: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," note the perfect submission which He manifests to God, His heavenly Father.

Hasten, my soul, to the feet of this great Preacher, who preaches to all mankind. Learn of Him what Christian perfection really is, and in this week during which we commemorate the death of our Lord, show your grateful remembrance of the sermon upon the cross by practising each day one of the seven virtues which by word and in deed our dying Redeemer inculcated upon us in His last moments.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

ON THE DARKNESS THAT OVERSPREAD THE LAND AT THE TIME OF OUR LORD'S CRUCIFIXION.

Picture to yourself the amazement of the multitude when the sun, which had been shining brightly, suddenly withdrew its light, the heavens were darkened, and the

stars appeared with a reddish glimmer. Who can describe the confusion that ensued, the angry rage of the executioners at finding themselves impeded in their brutal work, the annoyance of the Pharisees, who could no longer feast their eyes and rejoice their malicious souls with the sight of our Lord's sufferings, the increasing alarm of the people who, as the exterior darkness closed more thickly around, by an interior illumination saw more clearly to their horror the crime whereof they had been guilty? Mingle in imagination in the multitude on Calvary and meditate upon that strange darkness.

1st. The darkness aggravated our Lord's sufferings. Have you ever observed how much, in sickness or deep affliction, darkness affects the unhappy sufferer, how oppressive it is, what depression it causes? How earnestly during the long, dark hours of night the sick man longs for the first rays of the rising sun; what a wonderful relief and alleviation he seems to experience when the returning day once more banishes the grim shades of night! Now it was at midday that our Lord was crucified, and yet the sun, brightly shining in its meridian glory, must needs veil its light in order that our Lord, drinking to the dregs the chalice of suffering, might endure the further torment caused by the darkness which in the ordinary course of nature He would have been spared. Marvel, my soul, at this and admire the mystery of divine charity! God works miracles to mitigate the sufferings you, a sinner, endure, and He also works miracles for your sake to enhance the agony of Jesus, His own Son. Think of this when in the dark, weary night you lie tortured with pain and unrest, and you will find it easier to bear your trial.

2d. Consider the mystic signification of this darkness. Jesus hangs upon the cross to achieve a victory over the kingdom of darkness. For that reason this darkness descends once more upon Him, the Light of the World, with the intention of quenching that light. But O marvel! The powers of darkness may indeed have rejoiced with a malicious joy at that natural darkness because it added

to the physical torture of the world's Redeemer; but our Lord, by bearing it patiently, conquered the spiritual darkness, the evil that prevails in this corrupt world. For the works of evil are in their nature essentially works of darkness; sin darkens the understanding and leads to everlasting night in hell. Look up, my soul, in compunction of heart to your crucified and suffering Lord, suffering in darkness; beseech Him to grant you the light of His grace, the grace which He purchased for you in that hour of gloom. Realize what a terrible reproach it would be for you, enough in itself to make hell intolerable if, in spite of Christ's patient endurance of the darkness that overspread the earth when He hung upon the cross, you were doomed to pine in misery, and that through your own fault, in the exterior darkness, the everlasting blackness of hell.

3d. Consider the gloom that weighed upon the soul of our Lord during His crucifixion. Alas! that external darkness was not the worst which Jesus had to bear. When the darkness increased all around, and a vague terror took possession of every mind and a strange silence brooded over the multitude, the depression caused by this gloom invaded our Lord's soul also. Alone and comfortless He hung upon the cross, suffering all and everything that a poor individual could suffer in the uttermost abandonment, without help or consolation human or divine; such pain as His no words can describe. By this spiritual anguish, this hour of interior darkness which wrung from our Lord the bitter cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He both bore the painful penalty of our real abandonment by God which we have brought upon ourselves by our own fault, and He also won for us the power to keep from making shipwreck completely in the extremity of our misery when we appear to be forsaken by God. But when wandering in the desert during this interior night, which frequently is permitted to close in upon the souls of those who love God for their trial, and which overtakes every one of us at the hour of death, we are now no longer alone, for Jesus, the Light,

the Way, the Truth has also passed along this road and imparted a blessing to it. He has subjugated its terrors, and for our consolation and support He has erected His cross in the wilderness of the world. Meditate on this further signification of the darkness under the oppression of which our Lord lay prostrate for three hours, and let it be to you a rich fund of consolation.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

ON THE REASON WHY OUR LORD CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE WHEN HE YIELDED UP THE GHOST.

To-day, my soul, let your attention be fixed upon our Lord at the moment when He breathes His last. The chalice of His Passion has now been drained to the last dregs, and the moment of dissolution has come. Our Lord wrestles with death; a cold sweat breaks out of every pore, and at this instant, the most momentous, the greatest the world has ever seen, He raises His head and with a loud voice He cries: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (St. Luke xxiii. 46.) It was a loud cry, a piercing cry, one which rang through the heavens and the earth; let us proceed to consider the cause of the loud cry which the dying Saviour uttered.

1st. It was a cry of pain. By it our Lord desired to make known the acute pain which the act of dying occasioned Him, the immortal God. The time had come for His sacred soul to disunite itself from the body which it had informed for three and thirty years, to which it was bound by the closest bond of affection. If two true and loving friends separate, if their separation is compulsory, it is a great sorrow for both of them. And whenever were two friends so closely united together as were the body and soul of Christ? for they had conjointly, working in perfect concord and charity, accomplished man's salvation and fulfilled the will of our Father in Heaven in every particular. Never, never had they stood in opposi-

tion to one another, in dissension and strife as is the case with sinful mortals. Hence it was that the moment of dissolution was so exceedingly painful for our Lord. Let it be your prayer that our Lord will vouchsafe to make death easy to you, for the sake of the bitter struggle His death cost Him.

2d. This cry is an expression of strength. Our Lord cried with a loud voice to show that He still possessed sufficient force and vigor to prolong His life, and hold death at a distance had He so wished. Dying persons, as we know, do not generally speak in loud accents. Christ died, He made the sacrifice of His own life for our redemption by His own express desire, as He Himself declared: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself; and I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again." (St. John x. 18.) Thus it was not under compulsion but of His own free will that He suffered death for love of us. May it be granted to you, my soul, to yield up your life to God freely and joyously, in the same dispositions in which you now consecrate it to the service of God, in order that ultimately you may be able to close it as our Lord did, with the same words on your lips: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

3d. This cry that our Lord uttered at the point of death was one of triumph. We read that Gedeon in days of yore by breaking pitchers and blowing trumpets terrified the Midianites to such an extent that he conquered them easily, and in like manner our victorious King, triumphing from the cross, when His sacred body was broken by cruel torture and acute pain, and His voice was lifted up like a trumpet-blast in one last, loud cry, vanquished the devil, burst asunder the brazen portals of Limbo, and inspired all the spirits of hell with terror. That is our Lord's pæan of victory that now resounds from the cross. If, my soul, you hope and desire in your last moments to raise this same cry of victory over the enemies of your salvation, you will be able to do so on one condition and one only: you must, like Jesus, die on the cross; you

must, that is to say, be crucified to your own will, to the world and to the flesh. Would death find you thus prepared if this day it were said to you: "Give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live" (IV. Kings xx. 1)?

HOLY THURSDAY.

ON THE PIERCED HEART OF OUR LORD.

Jesus has yielded up His spirit; His weary head has sunk upon His breast, and at the same instant in which He drew His last breath the earth quaked, the rocks were rent and fell asunder, all nature mourned, and a thrill of fear and horror ran through the whole earth as a witness to the divinity of the Crucified, and a warning to man of the enormity of his crime. It was consummated; our Lord's soul quitted His body, and all who heard the last cry of the expiring Redeemer, uttered in His death agony, trembled at the sound. But one of the soldiers who stood beneath the cross raised his spear and thrust it with such violence into the Saviour's side, that forthwith there flowed therefrom blood and water. Hast Thou not suffered enough already, O persecuted Jesus! Why dost Thou permit Thy broken heart to be thus pierced by a cruel lance? Let us consider the reasons.

1st. Our Lord allows Himself to be tortured in every member of His sacred body, because man has sinned with every part of his body. He suffers His heart, hitherto unwounded, to be pierced with a lance, in order to make atonement for the sins all the members of the human race have committed in their heart, which is the seat of every corrupt thought and desire. It was the all-surpassing love of Christ that guided that lance. It was that divine charity that desired to expiate all our transgressions; it was that charity which resolved to shed His blood even to the last drop for our redemption. Our Lord willed to be the pelican who wounds her breast for the sake of her young;

He willed to give His heart's blood as a remedy for His people who had imbibed the fatal venom of the serpent. O blessed Jesus, wound my cold, sinful heart with the lance of Thy love that I too may feel the pain of that thrust, the pain of bitter but salutary compunction.

2d. Consider that our Lord suffered His heart to be opened by a spear, in order to indicate, as St. Augustine asserts, that now the portals of life are thrown open, through which the streams of divine grace flow down upon mankind. Yes, the riven heart of Jesus is the heavenly paradise; thither sick souls may go to obtain medicine for their spiritual maladies; and there devout souls may take refuge. Like timid doves they seek and find in the heart of Jesus, as in a sure hiding-place, protection from the spirits of hell, the infernal birds of prey. It is the mystic abode of pious souls, who say with St. Eleazar: "If you desire to find me, O my friends, seek for me in the wound of our Lord's sacred side, for there you will surely find me." Remember, my soul, that the Scripture says: "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." (St. Matt. vi. 21.) Ask yourself whether the heart of Jesus is indeed your spiritual dwelling-place, whither you betake yourself for rest and refreshment in preference to any other, or whether you have treasures elsewhere, treasures to which your heart fondly clings, and thus the sacred heart of Jesus was pierced and opened for you in vain.

3d. Consider that as God took a rib out of Adam's side when he was asleep in the Garden of Eden, and out of it formed Eve, the mother of our physical existence, so on this day the side of the second Adam, sleeping upon the cross, was opened in order that the Church, our spiritual Mother, may find therein the source whence she derives her life and vigor in the holy sacraments, which are symbolized by the blood and water flowing from the Saviour's riven side. It is by the water of the holy sacraments that we are cleansed from our transgressions, and it is by the blood of Jesus that our souls are nourished and preserved to life eternal, pre-eminently in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar which was instituted on this day, and in which

it flows continually. The soldier's lance opened to us this perennial spring, whence the holy sacraments flow. Rise up then, my soul; go down this very day into the true pool of Siloe, cleanse yourself in its purifying, its healing waters, by virtue of which you may appear clean and whole on the approaching festival of Easter.

GOOD FRIDAY.

ON THE BURIAL OF OUR LORD.

Picture to yourself the mournful procession which to-day wends its way from the summit of Calvary down to the garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus and Joseph, assisted by the disciple whom Jesus loved, are carrying our Lord's sacred and precious body to the tomb; they are followed by His heartbroken Mother, Mary, the most bereaved, the most to be pitied of all the mothers in Israel; they are followed by Magdalen, dissolved in tears of bitter grief, and the devout women, sorrowing sore, close the melancholy funeral procession. But that is not all; the angels of God, unseen by human eye, are present; they witness the burial of their Creator. In spirit join the company of mourners, accompany them to the sepulchre wherein your Lord was laid, and meditate upon this solemn scene.

1st. His sepulchre is in a garden. It was in a garden that the sentence of death was passed upon the human race, hence He who took the condemnation upon Himself was buried in a garden. The fall of man took place, his *destitution* commenced in a garden, and to-day his *restitution* is accomplished in a garden. It was in a garden that the first Adam, by his prevarication, closed the portals of heaven against his posterity; and it was whilst His body rested in a garden that the second Adam, descending to Limbo, opened the gates of heaven to all believers.

Betake yourself therefore with feelings of profound gratitude to the sepulchre of our Lord to-day; and if your

heart is to be a spiritual tomb wherein our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament will rest, O spare no pains that this grave may be in a garden, a garden filled with fair flowers and the choice fruits of good works, fragrant with the perfume of your virtues. Is this so with you, or is our Lord's spiritual grave in a desert instead of in a garden?

2d. It is a new grave in which Jesus is laid. It was meet and right that it should be so, for He was a new man, one such as the world had never seen before, for He was both God and man; His Mother was a woman such as the world had never seen, for she was a mother and at the same time a virgin; His doctrine was new, His manner of life was new, His miracles were new, and finally through Him the whole world was made new. Betake yourself therefore to-day, my soul, with a thankful heart to the sepulchre of our Lord; and if your breast is to be a spiritual grave wherein He is to be laid, O spare no pains that it may be a new grave which you offer Him as His resting-place. Cast out the old leaven of sin, strip yourself of the old Adam, put on the new man and pray in the words of the Psalmist: "Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels." (Ps. l. 12.)

3d. Finally it is a stranger's grave in which Jesus is laid. Behold He to whom the Heavens and the earth belong, He who created all things, who upholds all things, who governs all things, has nothing that He can call His own at His death any more than He had during His life. He lived as a stranger upon earth and as a stranger He died. So true and faithful was Jesus in His love of poverty. He was born in a stable, He sojourned in a dwelling that was not His own, He died upon the cross, and now He is interred in the monument of another. Betake yourself to-day, my soul, with a thankful heart to our Lord's sepulchre; there renew your vow of voluntary poverty, the poverty which He observed so perfectly unto His life's end; and if your heart is to be a spiritual grave wherein He is to be laid, let it be the grave of a stranger; see that you always feel yourself a stranger, an alien here below;

do not ever make earth your home; let not your heart cling to earthly things, but ever look and long for heavenly things; know that as soon as the Christian—still more the Religious—begins to feel really comfortable and at ease upon earth, then he may be sure that he has not the right spirit, he is not in the right dispositions. Bestir yourself then, my soul; see that you prepare a spiritual tomb for our Lord within your breast; a grave that is like a garden, that is new, that is the grave of a stranger upon earth; then you will have every reason to hope that the grave of your mortal body shall, like that of our Lord, be glorious.

HOLY SATURDAY.

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT OUR LORD'S SEPULCHRE.

Imagine, my soul, that you are contemplating the holy Mother of our Lord standing beside the sepulchre of her divine Son. See how, before the massive block of stone closes the entrance for ever, she casts one more fond, lingering look on His beloved remains, a look in which grief and love are mingled; once more she bedews His countenance with her tears and takes a final, sad farewell of the Son of her love. Impress the image of the mourning Mother of God upon your mind and keep it before your eyes during your meditation.

1st. Consider with what feelings Mary gazed upon the dead body of Jesus. She saw before her the body of her Son, supernaturally conceived without stain by the operation of the Holy Ghost, flesh of her flesh, the life of her life, the sacred vessel fashioned in her pure womb by the overshadowing from on high, now bereft of all beauty, of all form, bereft of the soul that animated it, subjected to the laws of nature which He Himself established, maltreated, defaced by the men for whose redemption He took this form upon Him, by them mangled and slain. Alas! how pallid are His cheeks, how sunken His eyes; there is no beauty left in that fair virginal body! O sor-

rowing Mother! words fail to describe the grief of this last look at the lifeless form of thy Son. Yet, my soul, are you aware that there is a sight still more grievous in Mary's eyes than this? It is when she is compelled to see the sacred body of our Lord laid in the grave of a heart unprepared to receive Him worthily, as perhaps she will have to do on the Easter festival to-morrow.

2d. Consider how lonely and forsaken Mary feels as she stands beside the sepulchre of Jesus. He who was dearest to her upon earth is dead. She has nothing left to her here below that can in any degree compensate her for His loss. Great as was the sympathy shown her by Joseph of Arimathea and the devout women, fondly as her adopted son, John the apostle, loved her, no one could be to her what Jesus was, no one could replace Him. The tomb by which she stood took from her her best, her all. Compassionate the sorrowing Mother of our Lord, and from her heartbroken grief learn a salutary lesson, that it is a good sign when nothing upon earth, nothing that we can possess, none of our fellow creatures, not even our nearest and dearest, who are united to us by the bond of blood, nay, not even one of the saints can compensate to us for the loss of Jesus. Let us therefore rejoice if we cannot be happy here below without Him, if, like Mary standing at His sepulchre, our most fervent aspiration and desire is "to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (Phil. i. 23.)

3d. Consider that Mary's only consolation after the burial of her Son was to visit the places hallowed by His sufferings and His death. Imagine the devotion where-with the lonely, forsaken Mother, left behind in her solitude, followed on the way of her Son's Passion, the way of the cross. Imagine the ardent affection that glowed within her heart as she climbed the steep of Calvary, the loving, pious tears that fell from her eyes on to the ground which her divine Son had moistened with His sweat of blood in the hour of His agony. Already, my soul, the alleluias of Easter sound in your ears; the feast is quickly approaching, the season of joy, and other subjects of a less

sorrowful nature will be the theme of your meditations. Yet learn of Mary from henceforth to visit from time to time the scene of our Lord's Passion; reflect at what moment and in what manner you will in future recall to mind His sacred Passion, and make a special resolution at least once in every week to follow with Mary the way of the cross.

EASTER SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION.

Go in spirit to our Lord's sepulchre. It is early in the morning; a hallowed silence rests on all around. The sepulchre wherein the body of Jesus reposes is securely closed by the heavy stone; it is guarded by soldiers who perhaps at the dawn of this the third day after His death recall with derision the prediction of the crucified One that He would rise again on the third day. That day has come now, but no sign of any change appears; the sepulchre remains just the same as it was yesterday and the day before, undisturbed, unaltered. Externally all is at rest, but behind the stone, within the tomb, the repose is not unbroken.

1st. Consider that our Lord's soul has just quitted Limbo, and accompanied by the holy patriarchs, has returned to the sepulchre, to be reunited to the sacred remains deposited there. There the body lies, wrapped in linen cloths, rigid and lifeless. What, think you, must the feelings of those devout patriarchs have been when they saw the price at which their redemption was purchased, when they gazed upon the dead body of our Lord, when they beheld it to be one vast wound, crimsoned with blood, marked with five large, gaping wounds, on hands and feet and side! Well may we suppose them to have been stimulated by this spectacle to give thanks anew to the Lord for the redemption He accomplished with so much suffering, the awful cost of which this sepulchre now reveals to them. Yet while they gazed in sorrow on the mournful sight the

sacred body of Christ presented, all was speedily to be changed, and a wondrous and joyful transition to take place.

2d. Consider the complete transformation our Lord's body underwent when the soul was reunited to it. All the disfigurement, all the stains and scars vanished in an instant; the defaced and mangled body is suddenly clothed with light and shines with greater brilliance than when transfigured on Thabor. Rigid and motionless a moment before, it suddenly becomes translucent, subtle, ethereal, endowed with immortality and with celestial splendor. The sacred wounds have not however disappeared; nay, on our Lord's glorified body they shine like stars and sparkle like precious stones, and the risen Saviour will ever retain them as a perpetual memorial of the redemption He accomplished. Here behold, my soul, an image, an earnest of your own resurrection. This body of yours which perhaps is now so unlovely, so defaced and deformed, so tortured by aches and pains, will one day shine with the radiance of the noon-day sun, will gleam as brightly as the morning star; but, be it observed, this will only be the case if it bears the marks not of transgressions and iniquities, but of those graces and virtues which flow from the five wounds of the glorified body of Christ, our risen Lord.

3d. Consider in what manner our Lord rose from the grave. Like a lightning-flash He penetrated the rock, the earth quaked, an angel descended like a flash of light from Heaven above and rolled the stone that closed the sepulchre to one side. The watchmen were struck with terror and became as dead men; they laid on the ground stupefied, dazzled by the brilliant light that streamed out of the sepulchre. Unseen by men the celestial cohorts hovered around the risen Christ; and as they once sang their joyous song: *Gloria in excelsis Deo* in the plains of Bethlehem, so it may be readily imagined that now, when their God and their King rose in triumph from the grave, a threefold victor over His foes, over death and over hell, in holy exultation they raised their jubilant

voices, repeating the words the Church to-day takes upon her lips: "This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Rejoice with them, my soul; let your alleluia rise up to Heaven, resounding out of the depths of a heart overflowing with joy and gladness; and let this day be nothing else but one long canticle of pious, joyous praise and thanksgiving to the glory of Him who on the third day rose again from the dead.

EASTER MONDAY.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THEIR WAY TO EMMAUS.

Picture to yourself the two disciples, who, deeply distressed at the events which had recently taken place in Jerusalem, had left the city and were pursuing the lonely road leading to Emmaus. Join them in spirit; listen to them while they talk together of our Lord's death, and mutually confide to one another their fears, their doubts, their perplexities. See how all at once Jesus, their risen Master, draws near and walks beside them. Fix your attention on the pleasing picture the Gospel for to-day presents to your view, and see what instruction may be gathered from it.

1st. Consider why our Lord appeared to these two disciples in particular. According to all that may be gathered from the narrative of the Evangelist, these two disciples were sorely grieved by the terrible occurrences of the last few days, and not only this, but doubt had crept into their minds and their faith had already begun to waver. Now this was the very reason why the risen Lord appeared to them, why He appeared to them in particular before any of the other disciples—because they were distressed at heart and doubting in mind; for after His resurrection, even in His glory, He is still the same; He is still the Good Shepherd who hastens anxiously to the succor of His sheep when He sees them to be in dan-

ger and in need of help. He is still the same merciful, loving God, of whom the Psalmist says: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit." (Ps. xxxiii. 19.) Ponder this, my soul, let it be for your solace; but at the same time remember that Jesus appeared to the two disciples when they were talking of Him on the way, that is, when their conversation was of spiritual subjects. If in the season of tribulation and of dread you seek distraction and recreation in useless, idle, vain converse and amusements, the risen Saviour will not appear to you and afford you the consolation of His presence.

2d. Consider the influence our Lord exercised on the hearts of the two disciples. The more He talked to them, the longer He was with them, the more completely their trouble of heart subsided, their doubts vanished; and at length they were filled with such wondrous consolation and supernatural gladness that later on they themselves were fain to acknowledge: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" (St. Luke xxiv. 32.) Here may be seen the difference between human and divine consolation, between human and divine instruction. As long as the two disciples mutually endeavored to cheer and encourage one another, they could not shake off their depression; as long as they mutually endeavored to enlighten one another and find an explanation of the events of the last few days they could not dispel their doubts. But as soon as Jesus speaks to them their sadness is changed to gladness, their difficulties and doubts are elucidated. Hear what the author of the *Imitation* says: "When Jesus is with us all is well. When Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is naught; but if Jesus speaks only one word we feel great consolation." (*Imit.* B. ii. ch. 8.)

Mark that, my soul, and in moments of distress and despondency, when doubts of the faith assail you and in all spiritual conflicts whatsoever, have recourse to Jesus; at such times a short prayer frequently proves

more efficacious than the most sublime conversations and consultations with men, or the reading of the most admirable spiritual books.

3d. Consider the entreaty of the disciples: "Lord, stay with us, because it is now toward evening." (St. Luke xxiv. 29.) At first the Lord made as if He would go further. He desired that they should themselves urge the request that He would stay with them, in order to furnish you with an instructive lesson. Although our Lord knows beforehand all our necessities and desires, although He is aware of every one of them, it is His will that we should first ask Him to grant us that which His love is ready to give unasked, and it is specially pleasing to Him if we seek the shelter of His protection when the shades of evening fall. If then the light of your faith begins to waver, if your hope is darkened, if the flame of your charity, of your zeal, of your virtue begins to wax dim, O delay not to have recourse to Him; pray Him: "Lord, abide with me, let not night close in upon me." The reason why night comes down on so many souls and envelops them in the darkness wherein they are lost is because at the first approach of twilight they do not with the two disciples implore our Lord: "Lord, stay with us!"

EASTER TUESDAY.

OUR LORD APPEARS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION TO HIS BLESSSED MOTHER AND THE OTHER WOMEN.

Imagine that you see Mary, the Mother of our Lord, Mary Magdalén, the penitent, and the other devout women repairing at an early hour in the morning to the sepulchre wherein Jesus was laid. They are the same women who only a few days previously traversed this same way, following the Condemned on His way to Calvary, amid the clamor and outcries of the raging, furious mob; and now they who to the very last faithfully and lovingly kept their station beside the Crucified One are

privileged to be the first who shall witness the glory of His resurrection.

1st. Consider that our Lord appears to His blessed Mother. With what fervent longing we can imagine that the holy Virgin, strong in faith, anticipated the dawn of the third day when the prediction of her divine Son was to be accomplished. Perhaps she hastens at a very early hour in the morning, before the roseate hues of dawn light up the eastern sky, on her way to the sepulchre, to behold Jesus, the Sun of justice, who is to rise from the grave and dispel the shades of darkness before the light of the natural sun illuminates the heavens at its rising. Her faith, her confidence was not deceived; an angel came down to the sepulchre, the earth quaked, and the Redeemer, risen from the dead, stood before her resplendent in surpassing beauty and majesty. What words can describe her joy, her delight, her happiness when she beheld Him whom but a short time before she held in her arms, who lay upon her knees a mournful, mangled corpse, now clothed in the robe of celestial glory! Mark this well, my soul, that, as the Fathers of the Church and pre-eminently St. Ambrose assure us, she to whom it was granted first of all others to enjoy the delight and rapture of that Easter morn, was the one who had felt most acutely the sorrows of the way of the cross, and had also displayed the greatest faith and courage on that sad pilgrimage. The more you suffer here below, my soul, and the more steadily the light of your unwavering faith and confidence burns during the night of affliction, the more reason you have to hope that you will sing with Mary a joyous alleluia in the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem.

2d. Consider how our Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene. She was walking to and fro in the garden, weeping bitterly, overwhelmed with profound grief, seeking her beloved Lord "because they had taken Him away." And now, when she finds Him whom she loves with the most ardent affection of her soul, and finds Him, not dead as she expected, but alive; when He in gentle, loving accents calls her by her name, O who can depict the rap-

ture, the ecstasy of that meeting! Ponder this attentively, my soul; first of all Mary, who represents suffering innocence, was privileged to taste the joys of our Lord's resurrection; then after her Mary, suffering penitence, who had followed Christ crucified with contrite love, these two were permitted before the other women to rejoice in the presence of their risen Saviour. Remember this whenever the yoke of the life of penance whereon you have entered becomes distasteful to you.

3d. Consider how, according to St. Matthew (ch. xxviii. v. 9) our Lord also appeared to the other women on the way. These women did not possess Mary's firm, unalloyed faith; they did not come, as she did, to see their risen Lord; they came for the purpose of embalming His lifeless body, to pay a last tribute of affection even in the sepulchre to the dead Christ, whom they had compassionated on the way to Calvary. And the love they thus displayed was so pleasing to God, that He vouchsafed to permit them to share before others the joy of our Lord's resurrection. Thus God is wont to reward every service of love. Wherefore rise up, my soul! Be tender and compassionate towards your suffering Lord in the person of your Brethren and Sisters; weep with those who weep; go with the mourners to the sepulchre, that you may there like the devout women show charity to the dead. Act thus, and it will do much towards obtaining for you the privilege of a blissful resurrection, and the beatific vision of the risen Saviour.

WEDNESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

ON THE FIVE WOUNDS OF OUR LORD'S BODY AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

Imagine, my soul, that you behold the risen Saviour at the moment when He, standing in the room where the apostles are assembled, shows Thomas the marks of His sacred wounds, bidding him look at them, touch them,

that thereby his faith in Him may be strengthened. These sacred scars, shining brightly in the glorified body of the risen Redeemer, were indeed well calculated to rekindle the expiring light of faith in the mind of the doubting apostle; the effect upon him was instantaneous, for we read that as soon as he saw the print of the wounds, with rapturous delight and adoring love he fell at his Master's feet, exclaiming in the joy of his heart: "My Lord and my God!" (St. John xx. 28.) Now let us proceed to consider the reason why our Lord retained the print of His five sacred wounds; the reason was of a three-fold nature.

1st. It was in order to confirm our faith. Like Thomas, face to face with the marks of these wounds we can no longer doubt that our Lord has risen from the dead, and that He who appeared to the apostles and disciples was really and truly the self-same Saviour who hung upon the cross and, transfixed by five nails, expired upon the cross. Now if the resurrection of Christ is the foundation whereon our Faith rests, and the marks of the five wounds are the seal which confirms the truth of the resurrection, you will readily perceive how greatly the fact that these signs of what He suffered for us were retained in His glorified body must strengthen us in the Faith. How thankful then you ought to be to your Lord, whose charity and forethought for you extend far beyond the grave.

2d. Consider that our Lord retained upon His glorified body the print of the nails in order to strengthen our hope. He ascended up on high to His heavenly kingdom, bearing on His hands and feet and side the five sacred wounds whence, when He hung upon the cross, there flowed that precious blood wherewith He appeased the just wrath of the Eternal Father. And in Heaven He lifts His hands above, showing continually to His heavenly Father this fivefold seal and sign of the reconciliation between God and man which He accomplished upon the cross. And if the Most High, in accordance with the promise He Himself gave to Noe (Gen. ix. 16), mitigates

His just anger, and will no more destroy all flesh with the waters of a flood when He sees the rainbow with its seven colors which He sets in the clouds as a sign of the covenant and of the reconciliation between Himself and the earth, how much the more will He let Himself be moved to mercy when He looks upon Jesus, His well-beloved Son, whom He gave to be a mediator to the world, and whose five sacred wounds are far brighter, more beauteous than the fairest rainbow? Ought not this, my soul, to strengthen your hope most powerfully? For now, like the timid dove that hides in the cleft of the rock to escape the talons of the bird of prey, you can at all times with hopeful confidence fly for refuge from hell's vultures to the wounds of Jesus Christ, which to all eternity are open for your shelter.

3d. Consider, finally, that our Lord retains the marks of His sacred wounds in order to kindle our charity. The Ven. Bede asserts that our Lord retained the print of the nails on His glorified body that they might be an everlasting memorial of His love to us and stimulate us to make a return of love. If Jacob's grief always burst forth afresh at the sight of the blood-stained coat his son Joseph had worn, will not the sight of the Saviour who was wounded for love of us, who for evermore will bear those signs of love, incite us to love Him in return, to kindle within our hearts an ardent flame of charity? Could you look unmoved on the scars of the wounds your friend received in doing battle on your behalf? Far from you such a thought! Do not then remain cold and indifferent at the sight of our Lord's wounds, lest at the day of judgment the marks of those wounds on the glorified body of your Judge should prove your perdition instead of your salvation.

THURSDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO PETER AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

Endeavor to realize the keen sorrow and contrition of the prince of apostles during the days that witnessed our Lord's Passion. His tortured heart was at one time overwhelmed with a storm of anguish and distress on account of the sad fate of his beloved Master; then again a tempest of grief swept over his soul, at the thought that he had denied that Master, and by his denial had added to and aggravated His sufferings. And now Christ was really dead and laid in the grave without his ever having had an opportunity of throwing himself at His feet in an agony of sorrow and repentance and hearing from His lips words of pardon and forgiveness. Night had of a truth closed in upon the apostle's soul, a night dark as the grave; yet suddenly a star of hope rises, the sorrowing penitent sees a ray of light amid the gloom; the tidings are brought him: the Lord is risen from the dead.

1st. Immediately Peter hastens to the sepulchre to ascertain for himself whether this announcement is true, and perhaps, as he hopes, even to see the risen Saviour with his own eyes. But his wish is not to be fulfilled so speedily. He does indeed find the grave to be empty, he finds that the body of Jesus is no longer there, but he does not see his beloved Master in person. Yet Mary, the Virgin-Mother, has already seen Him; He has also shown Himself to Mary Magdalen the penitent, and even the other women have beheld Him. How is it that Peter, the greatest, the chief of the apostles, is not yet privileged to enjoy that signal happiness? We need not search long for the reason. By their fidelity, their love, the sympathy they evinced for their crucified Lord, Mary and Magdalen and the devout women deserved to see their risen Lord sooner than the apostle who denied all knowledge of Him. Ponder that, my soul, and remember whenever our Lord delays to come to you with His consolations, His grace, His suc-

cor, if He does not impart them to you as soon as He does to others, seek the primary cause in yourself; ask yourself seriously whether you have acted so as to deserve that the Lord should draw near to you in His compassion and loving kindness; whether you have been as faithful to Him in the days of prosperity as you would have Him be to you in the season of adversity.

2d. Consider with what feelings Peter stood in our Lord's presence when the latter actually appeared to him. Must he not have fallen at the feet of his risen Master, overcome by an excess of contrition and grief? confessing his fault with floods of tears and earnestly imploring pardon? Must he not have acknowledged himself to be quite unworthy that our Lord should condescend to appear to him? Must he not for ever afterwards with warmest gratitude have remembered the extreme kindness wherewith Jesus in His charity received the disciple who had denied Him? Reflect, my soul, on your part whether such should not be the sentiments animating your heart whenever our Lord appears to you with His grace, especially in Holy Communion; whether you also like this apostle ought not to weep over the sins which have rendered you unworthy that our Lord should visit you; whether you ought not to acknowledge and confess in all humility that you are far more deserving of the just chastisements of your God than of His pardoning love.

3d. Consider that Peter immediately hastened to seek out his fellow apostles, to proclaim to them the joyful tidings of Christ's resurrection and thereby to confirm their faith, as our Lord commissioned him to do. This is one characteristic of holy, magnanimous souls, that they do not desire jealously to keep the graces, the consolations wherewith God favors them all for themselves; they feel urged to share them with others; they long for nothing more ardently than to lead many, nay, all their brethren to Christ, that they too may rejoice in His graces and His blessings. As there is no saint who does not prize his own soul above everything else, so there is no saint who does not love the souls of others as he loves his own. Is

it so with you? Are you like Peter, who hastens to give joy to others and to confirm them in the faith?

FRIDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES ON THE SEASHORE.

It is early morning. A little boat is floating on the still waters of the lake of Genesareth; in it are some fishermen who have been toiling and exerting themselves all night long at their trade, but without meeting with any success; they have not caught any fish. Those men are our Lord's disciples. Just as they have taken in their nets and are preparing to return home, all their efforts having been fruitless, our Lord appears to them on the banks of the lake, calling to them in accents of tender, loving solicitude: "Children, have you any meat?" (St. John xxi. 5.) Keep this scene before your eyes during your meditation.

1st. Our Lord does not make this inquiry of His disciples concerning food on His own behalf—He has risen from the dead, and His glorified body stands in no need of earthly aliments—it is for their sake that He asks whether they have a provision of fish. His design is to bring them, through the recognition of their own poverty and weakness, to a sense of their dependence upon Him, their Master, to show them how little they can do without Him, and then to afford them assistance and give them an abundant harvest of fishes. O most bountiful Jesus! How often dost Thou stand before us, asking something from us not for Thyself, but for our benefit. So it is with you, my soul; as He once craved a draught of water from the woman of Samaria, in order that He might give her in exchange the living water of divine grace, so oftentimes He knocks at the door of your heart by means of your Brethren and Sisters, asking from you this or that trifling act of charity, requiring of you this or that sacrifice, with the purpose of bestowing on you a great, a superabundantly

great reward, provided you hear His call and obey His voice.

2d. Consider the command our Lord gives to His disciples, to cast the net out once more. What behest could have been more inopportune, more inconvenient than this? How strange, how wanting in common sense we may almost say, this suggestion must have appeared to these men, experienced as they were in their craft. They had already cleansed their nets and stowed them away carefully, and now to cast them out again seemed utterly useless, since during the livelong night, which was the proper, suitable time for fishing, they had caught nothing. In spite of this they obeyed, they submitted their apparently better judgment and did as they were bidden, and the recompense of their obedience was a draught of fishes more numerous, of larger size than any they had previously taken in the waters of the lake. Here, my soul, you see the blessing that attends upon obedience. Take example from these disciples. By obeying, by subordinating your judgment to the will of your Superior, you will gain a great reward; whereas if you throw off the yoke of obedience you will perhaps labor all night without taking a single fish in your net. Look back at your past life and ask yourself whether it does not afford confirmation of this truth.

3d. Consider that our Lord was recognized first of all by John, who said to the others in the ship: "It is the Lord." (St. John xxi. 7.) John was the eagle that proudly soars aloft and gazes on the sun, the emblem of the contemplative and meditative life; he was also the virgin apostle. Hence we may learn what first and foremost leads to the knowledge of God, to the comprehension of the mysteries He has revealed, to the sense of His nearness, to the reception of His inspirations, of His graces. It is the contemplation of God, meditation upon the truths of revelation, a life of chastity and virginity. "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." (St. Matt. v. 8.) If you keep your soul pure and unstained; if you consecrate yourself with chaste heart to the contemplative life; if, as far as your daily duties per-

mit, you keep up the practice of daily meditation, then you will, like John, be the first to recognize the Lord, to feel Him near and experience His consolations, and you will gather in as rich a harvest for your spiritual life as the disciples did for their material existence on this day. But if hitherto your efforts have been devoid of success, if in fact you have labored all night long and taken nothing, O examine yourself, ask yourself whether the reason is not to be found in the fact that there has been about you too little resemblance to John, the virginal apostle, the contemplative saint.

SATURDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

ON THE OCCURRENCES THAT TOOK PLACE AFTER OUR LORD APPEARED AT THE LAKE OF GENESARETH.

To-day, my soul, fix your attention again on the miraculous draught of fishes; realize the astonishment of the apostles when they suddenly felt their nets become heavy, and on drawing them out of the water found that they contained such a multitude of fishes that there was every reason to fear that the meshes would break under the weight. Then indeed their eyes were opened, and they knew at once who was the mysterious Stranger standing upon the shore, who had commanded them to let down their nets for this unwonted harvest.

1st. Consider the mystic meaning of this draught of fishes. The apostles are fishermen, and this their successors must ever be in their character of preachers and teachers. The net they cast is the holy Gospel, and every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. This net is cast on the right side of the ship when the true doctrines of the Catholic Church are published with a sincere intention and a pure heart. The Fathers of the Church attach a mystic interpretation to the number of fishes taken—which St. John asserts to have been a hundred and fifty-three. The total number of the fishes, they de-

clare, signifies the whole number of the redeemed who are enclosed in the Catholic Church as in a net, and are divided into larger or smaller groups according to their state and calling. Thus a hundred is supposed to represent the number of the married, fifty that of persons living a life of continence in the world, and the smallest number, three, to denote those who are entirely and exclusively consecrated to God by the vow of virginity. You, O reader, if you are a Priest or a Religious, belong to this last and least group; you have cast in your lot with the small number of those who are exclusively devoted to the service of God; take heed therefore and see that when the net is drawn up to the shore you are found to be one of the good, not one of the bad fishes it contains.

2d. Consider St. Peter's conduct on the occasion of this miracle. As soon as John said: "It is the Lord," his eager, impetuous nature could not wait until the boat was brought to land. He girt his fisher's coat about him, being careful to observe, as St. Chrysostom bids us remark, the reverence due to the person of his Master; then his ardent temperament urges him to cast himself into the water; he cannot wait until the ship brings him to Jesus' feet, he swims to shore to reach Him sooner. You also, my soul, without acting rashly and precipitately, so as to neglect the respect due to your Master, but with moderate and well-ordered zeal, should strive to reach your Lord as soon as possible, to arrive at the shore of eternal felicity where He is waiting for you, without being detained in the purgatorial fire. If such be your desire and your aim, cast yourself with St. Peter into the sea, into the bitter, storm-tossed waters of compunction, of penance, of mortification, of self-denial. If you swim through this sea with fortitude and perseverance, strengthened as St. Peter was by the ardor of love, you will attain the shores of the heavenly country more quickly than by the ordinary way.

3d. Consider the mysterious food which the apostles found prepared for them on the bank of the lake. When they got out of the ship we are told they saw hot coals lying there and a fish on it and bread. Thus after His

resurrection our Lord shows Himself to be the self-same wonder-working Father and Provider, who supplies His children with food without any man giving to Him. The aliments prepared in this mysterious manner have a deep signification. If it be considered that Christ Himself is wont to be represented under the figure of a fish, who can fail to see in the fish laid on the fire with bread, an image of our Lord in His Passion, the hot coals symbolizing the glowing fire of charity on which His sacred body was laid for our sakes, and on arising from which He gave Himself to the Church as the Bread of Life. At the same time learn from this incident that our Lord, whilst you toil and spend your strength in His service, is meanwhile preparing for you a spiritual banquet for your refreshment at the end of your labors. Wherefore let no work which you perform in the service of God here below, no labor however arduous, seem too hard for your strength, for your Lord has already prepared for you a place at His table above, the table of celestial bliss which you will enjoy not for a short season but to all eternity.

LOW SUNDAY.

ON OUR LORD'S APPEARANCE TO THE APOSTLES.

Imagine yourself a witness of the animated scene depicted in to-day's Gospel. On the evening of the Paschal Feast the apostles are assembled in the cenaculum; they are discussing the tidings told to them by the women. Alternately inspired with fresh hopes and assailed by cruel doubts, they waver between hope and fear; and while their souls are thus tortured with perplexity, suddenly Jesus, their fondly loved Master, whose loss they have so deeply deplored during the last few days, stands in their midst and salutes them with the loving words: "Peace be with you." (St. John xx. 19.)

1st. Our Lord appeared to the apostles later than to the women, on the one hand as a slight punishment for the

weakness which they had displayed during the Passion, and on the other for the purpose of kindling within them a more vivid desire and longing for Him by the delay, and thereby increasing their joy at seeing Him again; for we know that the more intensely one longs for anything, the more one rejoices when one becomes possessed of it. How often, my soul, has it happened that you have ardently craved some grace or favor from God; you have cherished some wish, some desire which appeared to you most excellent and useful, but the Lord has postponed the accomplishment of your desire, He has withheld the coveted favor either for your correction, or because you are not yet worthy to receive it, or for your greater good, as you will see later on. Look into your past life and you will find in it a corroboration of these words of the author of the *Imitation*: “Desires often inflame thee and hurry thee on violently; but ponder well whether it be for the honor of God or thine own interest that thou art rather moved.” (B. iii. ch. 11.) Very often the delay in granting your desire has the effect of making you pay greater attention to Him whose honor alone ought to be your chief concern, your God.

2d. Consider that our Lord appeared to the apostles when the doors were shut. By this Christ intends to signify to us that if His servants would enjoy the happiness of receiving Him as their Guest, they ought to keep their door closely shut, the door, that is, of their heart. Jesus is a jealous God. He will tolerate no rival. The more carefully you close your house, the less easily will strange guests obtain access to it, the less is the intrusion of the world, of evil passions to be feared, and then the more surely you may count on the coming of that heavenly Visitor through the closed portals of your heart, who on this day rejoiced the apostles by His presence. “Shut thy door upon thee and call to thee Jesus, thy beloved; stay with Him in thy cell, for nowhere else wilt thou find so great peace.” (*Imit. B. ii. ch. 20.*) Lay to heart this saying; cleanse your house this very day from all that has no right to be there; banish certain propensities, habits, at-

tachments; then shut the door and, like the apostles, await in holy tranquillity the coming of your Lord.

3d. Consider how kind our Lord is to the apostles. They do not hear a single word from His lips concerning their dastardly desertion of Him; He only wishes them peace, peace after the troublous, calamitous days that are past. Nay, He goes so far in His charity and condescension as actually to partake of fish and honeycomb in their presence in order to banish all fear and set them at their ease, although in His glorified state He has no need of food for His support. Admire the charity which our Lord manifested towards His disciples, and which He has often manifested towards you. Learn also of Him in like manner on your part to stoop, out of charity towards your neighbor, to perform for him some trifling service that may perhaps seem hardly becoming to your superior position and to your personal dignity. Humility is never derogatory to our office or person; on the contrary, it places them in a better light and reflects honor upon them. Wherefore practise some such little act of charity this day, and place before our Lord, who to-day comes to dwell in your heart, some oblation of this description; instead of the broiled fish offer Him an act of mortification and penance, and please Him with the sweet honey of holy devotion during divine worship this day.

MONDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

ON THE MISSION OF THE APOSTLES.

Picture to yourself, my soul, the moment when our Lord, after His resurrection, standing in the room where the apostles were assembled, confides to them the glorious mission to the whole world, to preach the Gospel to all nations, solemnly transmitting to them the task of carrying on His work upon earth in these words: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." (St. John xx. 21.) Investing you, that is to say, with the fulness of My au-

thority, the plenitude of My power as My representatives. A grand and glorious office indeed, but one of no slight difficulty and responsibility, as we shall proceed to see.

1st. According to His own words which He employed on an earlier occasion our Lord sends the apostles forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." (St. Matt. xx. 16.) He sends them as the Father sent Him to the cross and suffering. The world around them still bears the stamp of sin, the wolf's nature that loves darkness, crafty, hypocritical and insatiable in its craving for pleasure and for revenge. Yet our Lord does not send forth His peaceful, gentle messengers defenceless to become the certain prey of the fierce wolves. No; on the contrary their mission is to transform the ravening wolf into a gentle lamb by the power of the Word and the might of divine grace. Now, my soul, meditate upon and strive to realize this momentous change; behold how magnificently our Lord's words have been fulfilled. Rome, who bore a wolf on her escutcheon, Rome, the mistress of the world, who in war and polities, in greed of conquest and love of luxury resembled nothing more strikingly than a devouring wolf, has now seen her vast earthly empire changed by means of the apostles and their successors into a spiritual empire, a heavenly kingdom over which Peter, the pastor of the new flock, and those who succeed him in the Papal See, hold undisputed sway. Marvel at this wondrous fact, and consider the instruments by whom it was effected.

2d. This stupendous change was accomplished by sheep, for thus our Lord calls the apostles, and the name befits them well. Sheep are exceptionally patient creatures; when led to slaughter they utter not a sound; when they are attacked they do not resist; they never do any one an injury, and they take no revenge when they are persecuted and tormented. Consider how all these characteristics may be discerned in the apostles; their whole life may be epitomized in three words: to bear, to suffer, to be silent. And these are the weapons with which they overcame the world. Take example from the apostles, learn of them, and lay to heart these golden words of St. Chrysostom:

“ As long as we act like patient sheep we conquer our foes without difficulty, but as soon as we assume the nature of wolves, they conquer us, for our divine Shepherd, the Lord Jesus, protects the gentle lamb but not the ferocious wolf. If thou art desirous to revenge thyself on thy enemy with greed of vengeance and calumnious speech, thou wilt resist and impede the action of divine grace within thee.”

3d. Consider that it was not solely by lamb-like patience that the apostles overcame the world, but also by the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. For our Lord enjoined this upon them when He sent them forth on their mission: “ Be you therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves.” (St. Matt. x. 16.) The prudent serpent knows well how to escape from her enemies, and when assailed by them her chief solicitude is to protect her head; she would rather lose her tail and have her body cut in twain than expose her head to receive an injury. Thus the apostles and all who believe their teaching, and you amongst the number, ought prudently to elude the enemies of their salvation and those who seek after their life; and if it is impossible to avoid a contest, they ought rather to surrender everything, their property and possessions, even life itself, in order to preserve and hold fast the one thing of real moment, the faith and the grace of God. But in doing so they should be like doves, without treachery or deceit, without bitterness or rancor, in order that by cultivating these characteristics of the dove they may only imitate what is good in the serpent and avoid what is evil in its nature. Ask yourself, my soul, to what extent you have hitherto followed this exhortation our Lord addressed to His apostles. To-day, and on certain fixed days, offer your prayers and penances for this intention, that it may please Almighty God to give to all whom He may now send out into the world as He sent the apostles, as sheep in the midst of wolves, grace to be wise as the serpent and simple as the dove.

TUESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

OUR LORD CONFERS UPON THE APOSTLES THE POWER TO FORGIVE SINS.

In the tranquil, hallowed eventide, at an hour similar to that wherein, after the Last Passover had been eaten, our Lord instituted the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, the apostles are again assembled around their risen Master. In this solemn moment He confers on them a new power, one which no mortal man has hitherto possessed, the power to forgive sins. Contemplate in detail the several points of this important action.

1st. "Our Lord breathed on the disciples." (St. John xx. 22.) How significant is this act. "By the word of God" (we quote St. Cyril's words) "man was created and God breathed into him the breath of life; He imparted to him His spirit. Again, subsequently to the fall, the Word of God raises man, and calls him from the death of sin to enter upon a new life. And in order that we may know that it is the self-same divine Person who created man in the beginning and sealed him with His spirit, now, at the commencement of our new, our renewed existence, He again imparts His spirit to the disciples by breathing on them. Thus by the same means whereby we were in the beginning called into being, we are also recreated and born anew." Endeavor to fathom the depth of this weighty saying of the saint, and consider that in very truth man is created anew by virtue of the power bestowed on the apostles on this day, that a new spirit is breathed into him, that a new life animates him.

2d. Consider how great is the divine charity in granting to men this power to remit sins. "Was it not," St. Thomas of Villanova exclaims, "was it not in itself an immense boon that our souls' salvation should be placed in Christ's hands? Where could we have found either in Heaven or on earth a more gracious, a more merciful Judge than Christ, who for our sakes came down from

Heaven, who was condemned and crucified that we might escape eternal damnation? Yet this was not enough to satisfy our divine Lord; He was pleased to commit this vast judicial power to His apostles, to priests, to mortal men, that is, who have sinful passions like all the rest. How do we expect that a Priest, himself conscious of sin, will conduct himself towards his fellow sinner? Will he not treat him with the same leniency and kindness which he would fain have shown to himself? O wondrous compassion, O inexpressible charity, that bids the sin-laden sinner go for relief to a fellow sinner, to one, however, who possesses authority to absolve him, who has the power to draw him back from the mouth of hell and set his feet in the way of Heaven!"

My soul, during Lent you many a time dwelt in thought on the ocean-depths of our Lord's charity, which was strikingly displayed in His Passion; but does not the charity He exhibited after His resurrection appear to be even greater, more ingenious, when you meditate upon this gift His grace bestowed on man?

3d. Consider that our Lord gave to His apostles the power to remit sins, without subjecting the sinner to any further penalty. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." (St. John xx. 23.) Such are the express words of our risen Lord. How merciful is this new code! "If a man accuses himself"—we quote the words of St. Chrysostom—"before an earthly tribunal, and gives himself up to justice, confessing himself to be guilty of theft or murder, he does not undergo the extreme rigor of the law; he escapes the gallows, or whatever punishment is due to his crime, but he is subjected to lesser penalty, a mitigated sentence is passed on him. How different is God's manner of dealing with transgressors, how far His mercy surpasses human comprehension! For when a man accuses himself, albeit in the most secret tribunal, the tribunal of penance; even if he accuses himself of the most heinous, abominable sins, not only will his misdeeds be forgiven him, but the punishment he has richly deserved, the penalty of eternal torment, will be re-

mitted. Earthly justice is deterrent and vindictive; its aim is to punish the evil-doer, the tribunal of confession seeks to make him better; the former puts the criminal to death, the latter rescues him from death and gives him new life." Are you inclined to say that it is a burden to have to go to confession? Confession is a burden, a wondrous burden replete with divine charity and grace. Give thanks to God to-day for the supernatural powers committed to the apostles, and ask yourself how you have hitherto profited by or yourself exercised the mysterious power to forgive sins.

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

ON THE BENEFIT OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

For the purpose of convincing yourself of the immensity of the benefit which the sacrament for the remission of sin, instituted by our Lord after His resurrection, is to man, place before your mind an unhappy sinner, guilty of mortal sin, who, like Cain, is tortured by remorse of conscience, who nowhere finds rest and tranquillity, whose nights are sleepless, whose days are full of disquiet and uneasiness.

1st. Amongst all the afflictions that trouble the human soul there is none more terrible than remorse of conscience. The stings of conscience, St. Augustine says, are greater torture than the gloomiest dungeon, nay, than hell itself. Oh the deplorable state of that conscience where Christ does not dwell, but the devil rules supreme! He who lives in a state of mortal sin makes his heart the throne of a tyrant who is cruel indeed. Whether he eats or drinks, whether he joins in sports or in amusements, his guilty conscience follows him like his shadow on a wall, poisoning his food, putting gall into his cup, spoiling his sports and turning all enjoyment into bitterness. Alas! how many groan upon the rack, writhe under the

torture of a guilty conscience. Perhaps after all, my soul, you may be one of these pitiable individuals.

2d. Consider on the other hand St. Paul's words: "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience." (II. Cor. i. 12.) The Apostle alludes to a clean conscience that has no stain of sin wherewith to reproach a man. This he designates as his "glory," and it may justly be thus designated, for there is nothing that gives joy and gladness of heart more than the testimony of a good conscience. "Keep a good conscience," we read in the Imitation, "and thou shalt always have gladness. A good conscience can bear very much and is exceeding joyful in the midst of adversity. . . . He will easily be content and in peace whose conscience is clean." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 6.) Ponder this golden maxim, look at the experience of your bygone life, and ask yourself if it does not bear witness to the truth of these words. And when you are fully and deeply impressed with the misery occasioned by a guilty conscience and the peace resulting from a good conscience, proceed to consider the third point.

3d. The power of absolution conferred on the apostles is that which is capable of delivering us from the torture of remorse and giving us peace. Confession, and that alone, says St. Thomas of Villanova, destroys the worm which gnaws our vitals, remorse of conscience. If you were to shed tears like an ocean, if you were to give most liberal alms, if you were to fast with the utmost rigor, all this would not still the reproaches of your conscience, or remove the burden of sin. The worm of an evil conscience cannot be appeased by indulgence in the pleasures of the table, by luxury or renown; it cannot be destroyed by means of fasting and mortification; there is but one means whereby it can be conquered, and that is the power of absolution conferred upon the apostles by our Lord after His resurrection; that alone can restore to us the jewel of a good conscience when we have lost it. Wherefore, my soul, give thanks to-day to your risen Lord for this gift of His grace whereby He renders a spiritual resurrection possible for you, and of your charity pray for

poor sinners that they may have recourse to this means of ridding themselves of the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience.

THURSDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF FREQUENT CONFESSION.

It was an immense favor, an unspeakable benefit which Christ conferred on mankind when He imparted to the apostles the power of remission of sin. But what does it avail for a spring to possess medicinal and healing qualities of the highest order, if the sick man holds aloof from it? Of what use is it for the physician to be acquainted with the most potent remedies if the patient refuses to take any of them? Represent to yourself the state of one who is spiritually sick, an unhappy sinner, who does not approach the Sacrament of Penance, who postpones from day to day the reception of the sacraments; and in order that you may be deterred from acting in like manner, that you may on the contrary be encouraged to go frequently to confession, let us proceed to consider the advantages to be obtained by so doing.

1st. Consider how much the sinner loses by not going to confession for a long time. Without the grace of God, which he continually neglects to seek and obtain in the Sacrament of Penance, all his acts of virtue, all his good works are dead; they are without merit for life eternal, they are unpleasing in God's sight and unworthy of His acceptance. Besides this, all the other good works he may have performed at an earlier period of his career are fruitless. Even supposing a man to have led for the space of fifty years a life of exceptional sanctity in the practice of daily self-denial and mortification, all this would avail him nothing if he falls into and continues in mortal sin, and finally dies in it, without having delivered himself out of that fatal state of bondage by confession and penance, already too long deferred. Think with what promptitude people will take measures to avoid

being hindered or prevented by ill-health from earning their bread or making their accustomed temporal gains; but in this case, where a far more important and considerable loss is at stake, what supreme indifference to the danger is displayed! Meditate upon this, my soul, and endeavor to realize what it actually is to go about for weeks, nay, months like a criminal condemned to death, a soul doomed to hell fire; when perhaps only a single second of time is needed—you might at any moment be carried off by a stroke—for the sentence of eternal damnation to be executed.

2d. Consider the spiritual danger of the sinner who neglects confession. If you were attacked by a fever, or by inflammation, the malady would continually become worse, the danger more imminent, the longer you postponed taking the remedies necessary for your cure. Nay, even a slight attack of inflammation—observe this, you who are inclined to make light of venial sin—will if neglected endanger life and ultimately perhaps prove fatal. So it is in the supernatural order. He who is spiritually sick, who, that is, holds aloof from the tribunal of penance, exposes himself, as St. Thomas of Villanova says, to the risk of gradually breaking through the restraints imposed by reason and the fear of God, and committing more grievous sins without fear or compunction. This is only too true; who so persists in venial sin sinks almost imperceptibly into a very dangerous state, that of tepidity, the customary forerunner of mortal sin. Ponder this, my soul, and acknowledge with all candor, has there not always been a marked retrogression in your spiritual life when you have not been to confession for a long time; and whenever you have fallen into grave sin has it not always been after not having been to confession in a long time?

3d. Hence we learn how great are the advantages of frequent confession. “Confess your faults frequently,” says one of the saints, “and you will experience a new impetus given to your spiritual life; you will feel the firm confidence in God, the alleviation of conscience, the

renewal of the whole inner man, the power to resist temptation, the facility in the performance of good works, the lightheartedness and spiritual joy which are the result and the reward of frequent confession." And although you may be in a state of grace, and have only venial sins whereof to accuse yourself, yet go to confession frequently, even though you find it a disagreeable task. It is true that nature in the summer time is always beautiful in itself, but how much more fair, how much fresher, how much more fragrant is the face of the earth after a sharp shower, although for the moment the shower is unwelcome and inconvenient. Now frequent confession is like a refreshing shower to the soul, unpleasant at the time, but most agreeable in its after effect.

FRIDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

ON THE THANKSGIVING TO BE MADE AFTER HOLY COMMUNION.

Represent to yourself, my soul, our Lord after His resurrection sitting at table with His beloved disciples, much as He did on that memorable occasion before His death, and partaking with them of their simple fare. As St. Augustine very justly remarks: only the power to eat, not the necessity for it, appertains to the glorified body. Charity was the motive that induced the risen Saviour to sit at table and partake of food with His disciples, and it is charity that actuates Him now when He provides for us a similar repast in Holy Communion. In that heavenly banquet He breaks bread and gives it to us, as once He did to the disciples at Emmaus; in it He prepares for us mysterious food, as He did for the apostles at the lake of Genesareth. Are you, my soul, thankful for this as they were? Can it with truth be said of you as it was of them: "The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord" (St. John xx. 20)? To judge by appearances neither your gratitude nor your joy seems to be very great.

1st. Consider how short and cold is the thanksgiving you make after the supper of the Lord. As often as it is recorded in Scripture that our Lord broke bread, almost invariably it is added that He gave thanks. This our Lord intends for our instruction, to teach us how we ought to comport ourselves after the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament; to teach us that we ought to spend at least a certain time in spiritual meditation and in rendering the thanks which are meet and right. Oh how many persons, even Priests and Religious, do not heed this! From their behavior one might imagine that they had merely partaken of ordinary bread. As soon as Jesus, their divine Guest, enters by one door, they immediately go out by the other, without a word of welcome to their heavenly Visitant. Oh, what ingratitude! St. Margaret, Princess of Hungary, was accustomed to spend the whole day in adoration after receiving Holy Communion, not allowing a morsel of food to pass her lips until the evening. Yet you, my soul, make so short, so cold a thanksgiving!

2d. Consider what St. Chrysostom says in regard to communicants who make no thanksgiving, who on leaving the Lord's table hasten away to their business and ordinary occupations, or what is worse, to indulge in useless conversation, foolish mirth or complete idleness. "What I have to say"—thus speaks the saint—"sounds very severe. Yet it is needful that I should say it because of this habit of negligence. When the traitor Judas received Communion at the Last Supper, with the other apostles, they all remained where they were, whereas he rose up and went out without waiting for the hymn of praise and our Lord's discourse. Those persons who, after communicating, depart without waiting to make their thanksgiving are imitators of Judas. For as he, when he went out, hastened to execute the project of betrayal which he had formed, so these unthankful persons return on the day of their Communion to their former follies, nay more, they fall again into the mortal sins of earlier days." Ponder that carefully, my soul, and if you feel conscience-

stricken on reading these words, bewail your past carelessness and stimulate yourself to be more fervent for the future in your thanksgiving after Holy Communion by the following consideration:

3d. The prophet Aggeus says to the people of Israel (ch. i. 6): " You have eaten but have not had enough; you have drunk but have not been filled with drink." How often you have eaten and drunk the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, and yet your soul is half-starved! You have drawn near to the furnace of divine charity and yet you have remained cold; you have entertained as your Guest the great King of Heaven, and yet you feel yourself to be as destitute as the poorest beggar. That may be ascribed to the short and lukewarm thanksgiving which you are in the habit of making after receiving Holy Communion. What good is it to you that the sun should warm the earth with its rays if you keep out of the way of it? What good is it to you that our Lord should come to you laden with the richest treasures, if you hasten away, instead of waiting to receive His gifts? Meditate upon this, my soul; fix your mind on the infinite graces, the marvellous blessings, the unspeakable privileges of these precious moments when, alone with your God, you hold converse with Him as a friend with his friend. Now only think what you do when you make so bad a use by the brevity, the languor of your thanksgiving, of that moment which millions may well envy you, that moment which was longed for earnestly but in vain by the saints of the Old Dispensation. If Esau once upon a time sold his birthright for a pottage of lentils, does not that soul commit a far worse act of folly and thoughtlessness who trifles away the blissful hour after Holy Communion for the sake of temporal affairs or frivolous conversation?

SATURDAY AFTER LOW SUNDAY.

ON SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

You may perhaps, my soul, sometimes feel tempted to indulge a certain not unholy envy of the apostles, when you read in the Gospels of the frequency of our Lord's appearances to them after He had risen again, filling their hearts with joy and gladness by reason of His beloved presence and His glorified state. Moreover we are told He Himself vouchsafed to break bread to them, by which we are to understand Holy Communion. Yet you have no occasion to envy the disciples, for you also can enjoy the same happiness as often as you choose; you can delight yourself in the blissful presence of Jesus as often as you go to Communion; you can gaze with the eye of faith on the splendor of His glorified body; and you can also procure for yourself the privilege of an hour of happy intercourse with Him whenever you make a spiritual communion. With the object of understanding this better let us consider:

1st. In what spiritual communion consists. It consists in an ardent and glowing desire to receive the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, a desire which impels one to exclaim with holy Job: "Who will give us of his flesh that we may be filled?" (Job xxxi. 31.) Just as a hungry man devours his food with his eyes, so we ought to fix the eyes of the soul with longing on the celestial nourishment. When in the holy Mass the Priest opens his mouth to consume the sacred species, the body of Christ, we ought at the same time to open the mouth of our soul and, urged by an ardent desire to receive that sacred manna, to utter the aspiration: "O Jesus, whom I love above all things, as the hart panteth after the fountains of clear water, so my soul panteth after Thee!" Then God will undoubtedly satisfy your craving with an increase of grace and of charity according to the promise

given to the Psalmist: “Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.” (Ps. lxxx. 11.)

2d. Consider, however, that it is an essential preliminary to spiritual communion to be in a state of grace. This the Council of Trent expressly declares: If the desire that is felt to receive this sacrament is to proceed as far as a spiritual communion, it must arise from a lively faith that worketh by charity; that is to say, he who cherishes this desire within his breast must be in the state of divine grace in order to be able to unite himself to Christ in a spiritual manner, and to participate in the fruits which this union produces. For one whose conscience was burdened with mortal sin would not only be incapacitated from making a spiritual communion, but the mere desire to receive our Lord in that state would in itself be another and an additional sin. If however you are in a state of grace, if you have the supernatural life within you, you will hunger for the supersubstantial bread. Hunger is in the natural order a sign of life, of vigorous, healthy life, and similarly, frequent spiritual communion affords undeniable evidence of healthy spiritual life.

3d. Consider of what spiritual communion is a proof, and what is the benefit derived from it. It is pre-eminently the sign of a good conscience, for only those whose conscience does not condemn them can really and truly long for our Lord’s presence, for they need not fear to approach Him; and it is furthermore a proof that the soul loves God, for that which we love we long for. And in respect to the profit to be derived from this practice, only consider how many acts of virtue are included in one spiritual communion: Acts of lively faith, of trustful hope, of fervent charity; besides touching humility, which, despite the strength and depth of its desire, does not deem itself worthy actually to receive Holy Communion, or which submits with docile obedience and diffidence to the hindrances opposed by circumstances and occasions. Consider also the graces God grants to one who communicates spiritually, for if ordinary prayer calls down from

Heaven a profusion of graces, how much the more must this act of worship do so, which consists of ardent desire, holy humility, and steadfast faith. Nay, some masters of the spiritual life assert that one spiritual communion, if accompanied by profound reverence and humility, procures for the soul greater and more precious graces than actual Communion, if the latter is lacking in due devotion and sufficient preparation. Since in days of yore a brazen serpent, as we read in the third book of Moses, could heal those who were fatally bitten by serpents, if they did but look upon it, is it not possible, think you, that the wounds of your soul may also be healed if you raise your eyes to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with lively faith and an ardent desire to receive Him? Wherefore let it be your constant practice to make a spiritual communion, and determine when and where you will habituate yourself to make it.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO THE APOSTLE THOMAS.

Imagine, my soul, that you see before you the apostle Thomas, irresolute, swayed to and fro by doubt; he is seated among the other apostles, listening to them while they joyously relate all they have seen and heard of the risen Saviour, but he attaches no credence to their story. Suddenly our Lord Himself stands before him with the print of His five wounds plainly discernible upon His glorified body, stands before the incredulous disciple who required to see those prints as a proof of the resurrection, and speaking affectionately yet reprovingly, says to him: "Put in thy finger hither and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side, and be not faithless but believing." (St. John xx. 27.) Keep this instructive scene before your mind whilst you make your meditation to-day.

1st. Consider the infinite charity which our Lord has

for His sheep. By reason of his unbelief Thomas was at that time a sheep that had gone astray. He requires to see with his bodily eyes that which is the object of faith, and this demand not only takes from faith all its merit, but actually annuls faith in the strict, supernatural sense of the word. "Blessed," our Lord says, "are they that have not seen and have believed." (St. John xx. 29.) Now it was in order to seek this wandering sheep, so weak in faith, that our Lord appeared again to the apostles after eight days. He only came on Thomas' account, to show him the marks of the wounds and thereby to cure him of his unbelief. He does not say to Himself: "All the other apostles believe; this one can be left to the fate he richly deserves;" no, this one sheep is as precious in His sight as are the others, wherefore He grants him the privilege of a second and a special visit. O gracious Lord Jesus, when I reflect how Thou didst seek me, a wandering, faithless disciple, and didst lead me out of the desert of the world into the safe fold of the sacerdotal state and the religious life; when I reflect how often, how very often, Thou didst visit me with Thy grace, well may I in holy astonishment and admiration of Thy loving kindness fall on my knees and exclaim: "My Lord and my God!"

2d. Consider the further details of this apparition. Our Lord did not appear to Thomas when he was alone, but in the presence of the other apostles, in order thereby to give the doubting disciple to understand that this favor was not granted to him for his own merits, but simply because he was in the company of the faithful and pious disciples. To isolate oneself without a special call to do so is never good. Many of the graces you enjoy in Community life would not be granted you if you were alone. Life in the society of devout persons has signal spiritual advantages, and through the fervent prayers of a single one of its members a whole Community has often been known to receive some special favor. Another reason why our Lord did not appear to Thomas when alone was this: because it was desirable that the apostles who had been witnesses of the unbelief of one of their breth-

ren, might also be witnesses of his conversion. Here again our Lord gives us a valuable lesson for Community life. Supposing that we have given scandal to our fellow Religious as St. Thomas did to the other apostles—if they have seen our wrongdoing, let us not feel ashamed to let them see our penance. Let us also endeavor, like St. Thomas, without any feeling of self-complacency, to edify those by our good works whom we previously distressed and scandalized by our evil deeds.

3d. Consider what meaning this apparition of our Lord has for us. “Except I put my hand into His side, I will not believe,” Thomas declared. Our Lord in His omniscience read the heart of the apostle and took his words at their right value. He knew, according to St. Cyril’s comments on this passage, that Thomas had no bad intention. The doubt that arose in his mind and which he expressed in words was due to the peculiarity of his character, and was the outcome of the partly depressing, partly exciting impressions of the last few days. Therefore in the kindness of His heart our Lord satisfied the apostle’s demand, unjustifiable though it was in itself, for his salvation and our instruction. For as St. Gregory (Pope) says: “By permitting the disciple to touch the print of the sacred wounds on His body our Lord healed for ever the wound of unbelief in our hearts; thus Thomas’ incredulity tends to root us more firmly in the faith than the ready belief of all the other disciples.” Here behold an instance of our Lord’s loving kindness, inasmuch as He employs the conversion of a sinner for our greater profit, and always knows how to bring good out of our evil.

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY
AFTER EASTER.

ON THE OTHER LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS INCIDENT CONCERNING ST. THOMAS.

To-day, my soul, you are invited to contemplate the unbelieving apostle in a more favorable light, one which brings out his characteristic qualities. When our Lord announced His intention of going to Bethania for the purpose of raising Lazarus from the dead, a journey which the apostles feared might endanger their Master's life, Thomas in affectionate anxiety and self-sacrificing courage said to his fellow apostles: "Let us also go, that we may also die with Him." (St. John xi. 16.) Since before our Lord's resurrection he gave such a noble example to his brethren, how came it to pass that after the resurrection he was found inferior to them all in faith? Let us consider the reasons.

1st. On the occasion of Christ's first appearance to the apostles Thomas was not with them; he did not see Him and consequently did not believe in Him. Learn hence, my soul, how pernicious it is to separate yourself from the society of your brethren, not to join them in prayer and divine worship, but to hold aloof in self-will and go your own way. Hear what Thomas à Kempis says: "He who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from grace; and he who seeks his own, loses those things that are in common." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 13.) "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name," Christ tells us, "there am I in the midst of them." (St. Matt. xviii. 20.) If you look back on your past life you will surely find that you have never made much progress when you have persisted in following self-chosen ways.

2d. Another reason was the presumption and impertinence of the apostle in imposing conditions upon God, venturing to dictate the ways and means whereby he

might be brought to believe in the resurrection. The ordinary way, trusting to the report of eye-witnesses, the assurances of his fellow apostles and of the women, is not enough for him; he requires something special and extraordinary to convince him. He must needs see with his eyes and handle with his hands; thus for the space of eight days he chooses to remain the prey of disquieting doubts. Learn from this the danger of despising the ordinary way of piety and the service of God, and grasping after uncommon, singular means, almost going so far as to require a miracle worked for one. "Not minding high things but consenting to the humble," the Apostle writes; and St. Bernard exhorts his disciples to spare themselves the disturbance of their peace, by avoiding singularities which are always productive of unrest.

3d. Finally consider that our Lord permitted Thomas to doubt for our sakes. The apostle atoned for the fault of which he was guilty by his generous confession: "My Lord and my God!" whereby, as St. Gregory the Great observes, he proclaimed the human and divine nature of Christ; the former by addressing Him as Lord, the latter by adoring Him as God. But for us his former doubts and unbelief are of great importance chiefly because of the consoling words our Lord added: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." For they are animated by a faith of a far higher kind, far more meritorious and blissful; a faith which is not dependent, like that of Thomas, on the testimony of the senses, but what is infinitely more exalted and more praiseworthy, a faith inspired by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Do you belong to the number of those whom our Lord declares to be blessed? Ask yourself this question seriously, and according to the answer of your conscience form resolutions to-day suited to the subject of your meditation.

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE REASON WHY OUR LORD APPEARED TO THE APO- TLES WITH THE PRINTS OF THE FIVE WOUNDS.

Imagine yourself present, my soul, with the apostles in the upper room at Jerusalem on the first day of the week, eight days after the resurrection; imagine that you too beheld with them the risen Redeemer standing in their midst, resplendent with the beauty of His glorified body, and that you saw on that spiritual body the prints of the five sacred wounds, transformed and transfigured, shining like bright jewels, ruby red. Why did our Lord retain these marks of His Passion, these memorials of His humiliation, of His ignominious death upon the cross, and why did He choose to show Himself to His apostles adorned with those five wounds? Let your meditation to-day answer this question.

1st. Our Lord showed Himself to His apostles bearing the marks of these wounds in order that they, and we likewise, might be confirmed in the belief in our future resurrection, the resurrection of the flesh. As the body of Christ, the same body which had been scourged, shamefully maltreated and slain, rose from the grave clothed with celestial glory—and that it was really the same identical body was proved by the print of the five wounds—so our lifeless bodies, in spite of death and corruption, will one day rise again resplendent with heavenly glory. And, be it observed, the marks of chastisement, of penance, of austerities which those bodies may bear will serve to increase their glory. Remember this whenever bodily suffering and penitential practices seem too difficult and onerous for your strength.

2d. Consider that our Lord appeared to His apostles with the marks of His sacred wounds for this reason also, to teach them that they ought not only to bear the physical suffering, but also the shame, the contempt, the derision

and mockery which their future office and vocation would bring upon them. For the fact that He was pleased to retain, and will retain to all eternity on His glorified body the memorials of the shame and ignominy He endured upon the cross, as a malefactor on the gallows, is a most urgent admonition to us to imitate the apostles, of whom Holy Scripture says: "They went from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts v. 41.) Do you also thus rejoice, my soul?

3d. Consider that our Lord appeared to the apostles with His sacred wounds for their consolation and peace of mind. For if He sent them forth, as He Himself declared, "as sheep in the midst of wolves," if He Himself predicted and warned them that men would persecute them and hate them, that they would be driven out of the synagogues, nay that whosoever killed them would think he did God service, what a relief and comfort it must have been to the poor, hunted, harried apostles to have one safe spot where they could escape from their enemies, one sure hiding-place whither their persecutors could not follow them, the wounds of Jesus Christ ever open to receive and shelter them. Mark this, and lay to heart these words of valuable instruction: "If we desire to possess a powerful weapon wherewith to resist the temptations that assail us—and these temptations are our persecutors—only let us hide ourselves in our Lord's sacred wounds;" for St. Augustine gives it as his experience that in all things whatsoever that befel him, he found no more efficacious remedy than to have recourse to the wounds of Christ our Lord. When we speak of hiding within the sacred wounds of the Redeemer we mean immersing ourselves in the ocean of His Passion in prayer and pious meditation; and this we should do not only during Lent, when we behold the precious blood dropping from those open wounds, but also in Paschal-time, when we see them gleaming brightly on the person of the risen and glorified Saviour.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH OUR LORD APPEARED AFTER HIS RESURRECTION, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE APPARITIONS.

After His resurrection our Lord remained upon earth for forty days. This was truly a season of grace for the apostles, to whom our Lord frequently appeared, at one time to console and cheer them, at another to instruct them, or again for the purpose of bestowing upon them some special favor. Imagine the disciples' joyful and happy frame of mind during those forty days; think of the holy longing, the eager expectation wherewith they waited for their Lord to appear to them again after each of His gracious visits.

1st. Consider that our Lord only appeared now and again to His beloved disciples, and that He appeared to some more often than to others, according to the needs of each individual. John was privileged to behold the risen Saviour more frequently than Thomas, and to the seventy disciples He appeared less often than to the apostles. Our Lord is accustomed always to act thus. He visits devout souls more or less often in a spiritual manner, with His consolations and His grace, to enlighten them and fortify them, just as it seems right to His divine bounty, or as the needs of the soul in question require; or again the number of His visits is proportioned to the greater or less intensity of her desire and her longing for the presence of the heavenly Bridegroom. Ponder this last reason more particularly. You long for all manner of things, you wish for the various pleasures and diversions, you seek the honors and possessions of this world; it seldom occurs to you to aspire after heavenly things, to seek the things that are above. Not until you find that your earthly desires are not gratified, not until you feel a dreary void within your breast, do you begin to long for your Lord. Wonder

not in such a case that His first visits are to souls whose yearning has always been for Him, or those at any rate who have begun to look eagerly for His coming much earlier, not so late as you have done.

2d. Consider that our Lord usually appeared without warning to the apostles, at a time when they were not expecting Him; observe also how short His visits were, how quickly He departed from them, and oftentimes at the very moment when they were deriving the most pleasure from His presence amongst them. Here, my soul, you see one of the peculiar characteristics of our Lord's visitations. He visits with His grace souls who are consecrated to Him when they least expect Him, while on the other hand He holds aloof from them when they are waiting and longing for Him with eager impatience. And when at length He permits the soul to be sensible of His divine consolations, to feel them near and to rejoice in them, suddenly, at the moment when she thinks to enjoy them in their fulness, He departs, leaving the soul desolate and cold which but an instant before was filled with consolation and glowed with the fire of divine charity. Perfect satisfaction can never be our portion here below, nor can real repose be attained on earth. Remember this and resign yourself to the will of God. "Seek true peace," our Lord says to you in the words of the Imitation, "not on earth but in heaven. Thou wouldest already be in the glorious liberty of the children of God; but thine hour has not yet come; rather there is yet another time, a time of war, and toil, and trial." (B. iii. ch. 49.) Learn therefore to be content if the Lord visits you as He did His disciples, at rare intervals and for a brief moment only.

3d. Consider that the risen Saviour appeared to His disciples at different times, in different places and under different circumstances. To Magdalen He appeared near His sepulchre, to Cleophas on the road to Emmaus; John saw Him on the day of His resurrection, Thomas eight days later; He appeared to the eleven apostles while they sat at meat, to the seven apostles when they were out on the lake fishing. In like manner our Lord favors you

with His gracious visits at divers seasons, now when you are at prayer, again when you are at work. Sometimes you are sensible of extraordinary devotion on an ordinary week-day, while, contrary to your expectations, the great festivals have left you cold and dry; at one time you will experience the fire of divine charity during your meditation; at another time while you are pursuing the most lowly avocations either within or without the cloister. "The Spirit breatheth where He will." Take heed therefore, my soul, to be ready at all times to receive the inspirations of divine grace; walk continually in the presence of God and see that whether you are at prayer or at work, whether you eat or drink or take your rest, you keep your heart fixed upon God and are always prepared to welcome Him as your Guest. But if you feel scant consolation and little delight at the time of His divine visitations, you have yourself to blame; it is because you did not hasten to open the door when our Lord knocked for admission into your heart; because your thoughts were so distracted by other things that you did not hear Him calling to you.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE GIFT OF DEVOTION.

Although the occasions on which our Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection differed much as regards time and circumstances, yet the joy of seeing their divine Master was for the most part granted to them when they were at their devotions, in pious anticipation of His visits, when they devoutly betook themselves to His sepulchre, or were assembled together for religious converse in the upper room. You also, my soul, will be more likely to enjoy the privilege of our Lord's visits if you apply yourself diligently to prayer and meditation, to the practices of devotion. Hence we see how important the

grace of devotion is. It is in fact well worthy to be made the theme of a special meditation. Place yourself therefore in the presence of God; or what is better, imagine yourself a saint, glowing with fervent devotion, holding sweet intercourse with the Most High.

1st. Consider what devotion really is. It is a beauteous ray of light shed upon our hearts, emanating from the Sun of infinite and eternal devotion, the Holy Spirit of God. A soul thus favored, oblivious of self, closing her eyes to all created things, only longs for God and is absorbed in the contemplation of His beauty. This devotion is to a certain extent a kind of beatific vision such as the blessed shall enjoy in Heaven to all eternity, and consequently it is a delicious foretaste of the sweetness and bliss which shall be our portion hereafter. It is a powerful attraction to God of all the powers of the soul, so that the understanding only thinks of Him, the affections only delight in Him, and the will is aflame with the sacred fire of divine charity. In this condition the soul cannot express herself otherwise than by exclaiming with St. Francis: "My God and my all!" Yet alas, you are far from experiencing such devotion; what is the reason of this?

2d. In order to find the answer to this question consider the means for obtaining the grace of devotion. In order to obtain this precious interior gift you must first of all seek it in prayer for a long season; you must exert yourself to acquire it; that is, you must observe strict custody of the outward senses, otherwise you will lose the measure of devotion you have already attained. Devotion flows from the heart; the heart is guarded when the senses are guarded. "Accustom thyself therefore," St. Dorotheus says, "not to allow thine eyes to wander and look around on idle and new things; beware of much talking, for this tends to banish the holy, profitable thoughts that are suggested to us from above." Whosoever desires to maintain the fire of devotion within his heart must, as Cassian asserts, be blind and deaf and dumb; that is, he must see as if he saw not, he must hear as if he heard not. St. Bernard had lived in his cell for a whole year, yet he

did not know whether it was roofed with stone or ceiled with wood; and the patriarch Palladius inhabited one and the self-same cell for twenty years without having ever raised his eyes once to the ceiling. Those were men of fervent devotion; if you are not kindled in the same manner, is there any longer need for you to ask the reason?

3d. Consider the advantages of devotion. The Apostle writes: “Exercise thyself unto godliness; for bodily exercise is profitable to little, but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” (I. Tim. iv. 7, 8.) External practices without interior godliness, i.e. devotion, are of little use. To say the office, to fast, to pray, to go on pilgrimages without real devotion is like a body without a soul. If the soul lacks devotion she will be wanting in holy zeal, in interior enlightenment, in spiritual consolation. But where there is devotion the soul feels herself blissfully elevated, animated and inspired by charity. Without devotion you are like land without water, dry and barren; you are like a furnace without fire, cold and useless. Wherefore implore this glorious and most necessary gift, and on your part remove out of the way all obstacles that may be opposed to the spirit of devotion; for unless indeed it is permitted in exceptional cases as a special trial, we ourselves are mostly to blame for our want of devotion. Let it be the object and point of your meditation to-day to ascertain where you are to blame in this respect; to discover the causes which hinder devotion in your case, and the means whereby they are to be eliminated.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON OUR LORD'S APPEARANCE AFTER HIS RESURRECTION TO
THE DISCIPLES IN GALILEE.

Picture to yourself, my soul, how five hundred disciples left Jerusalem and repaired to Galilee, because, as the angels announced at the sepulchre, Jesus would show Himself there to His disciples. Imagine the different frames of mind of these disciples; some went animated by holy longing; others still doubted; others again wended their way thither with sentiments of hopeful joy. This journey to Galilee to behold the risen Saviour was the first Christian pilgrimage.

1st. Consider that of all Christ's appearances after His resurrection this was the one most calculated to confirm the faith of the disciples. Our Lord told them beforehand, at the Last Supper, that He would appear to them again in Galilee; the angels also at the sepulchre sent a message to the apostles by the women, reminding them of their Master's promise to that effect. Now, when our Lord actually fulfilled that promise, when He presented Himself to His disciples and thus verified His own prediction, must not that have been the means of confirming the belief of the disciples in their Lord and most powerfully strengthening their faith in His predictions? Yes, His utterances are true, His promises sure. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than a single word from His lips remain unfulfilled. This is indeed a consoling truth for you, who, relying on His glorious promises, have left all to follow Him. Here are five hundred witnesses at once who bear you testimony that your trust is not misplaced.

2d. Consider the ardor manifested by the apostles. Although they had repeatedly seen the Lord, although He had appeared to them in the upper room in Jerusalem

and also at the lake of Genesareth, yet they did not shrink from undertaking the journey to Galilee, and resolutely climbed the steep mountain, heedless of fatigue, in order to see Jesus once more. And yet, my soul, how easily you are satisfied. If God of His charity stoops to your lowly estate, if He vouchsafes to come to you, then you are well pleased; but you are far too great a lover of your own ease to go to Him, to rise up above your ordinary, your every-day practices of devotion and ascend the mount of greater perfection for the sake of beholding Him more closely. You desire the divine consolations, the divine visitations, but you will not on this account move hand or foot, put yourself to any inconvenience. No, my soul, imitate the apostles, and constantly remember that those are truly Christ's disciples—and this applies pre-eminently to Priests and Religious—who do not await His coming in the cenaculum, but who go out into Galilee, who climb the mountain for the sake of beholding their risen Lord; we mean those who spare no effort or exertion and strive solely after perfection.

3d. Consider that our Lord on this occasion, as at every other time when He appeared to His disciples, discoursed only of the kingdom of God, and the means whereby it could be attained, never speaking of useless and earthly subjects. Such conversation is not pleasing to the Lord; such are not the words that are heard from His lips. If you would enjoy intercourse with Him, if you aspire to be visited by Him you must feel disgust for the things of time and sense, and only long for heavenly things; nay, you must only love your brother for His sake, or desire what is needful for your earthly subsistence in accordance with His will. Hear what Thomas à Kempis says: "For Him and in Him let both friends and enemies be dear to thee; thou must be naked and carry a pure heart to God if thou wilt rest and see how sweet the Lord is. It is a great art to know how to live with Jesus and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom." (Imit. ii. ch. 8.) How poorly you have hitherto learnt this art, how little of this wisdom have you displayed! Will you

not do better in future, and, if so, how do you intend to set about it?

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE MIRACULOUS POWERS WHICH THE RISEN SAVIOUR PROMISED TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIM.

Before our Lord ascended to Heaven after His resurrection, He made this singular promise to His disciples: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." (St. Mark xvi. 17, 18.) Now, after imagining that you hear the Lord addressing those words to His disciples, meditate on the following points:

1st. Consider how this promise made by our Lord was literally fulfilled in the first ages of Christianity, and how in later times these signs have never entirely ceased and are even now to be witnessed, although they do not occur nearly so frequently, and for this reason, that they are no longer as necessary as they were heretofore; in the present day every man of good will has grounds enough for faith. God never works miracles unless they are required, any more than a gardener continues to tend and water a tree that has grown up and is firmly rooted in the same way and with the same care as when it was a small, weak plant. To demand miracles now to enable one to believe would be to act in a similar manner to the Jews of old, who came to our Lord tempting Him, asking Him to show them a sign from Heaven that they might believe; and this they did after our Lord had already raised the dead in their sight, healed the sick, and fed thousands by the miraculous multiplication of bread.

2d. Consider that in the present day all these same wonders are worked in a spiritual manner by Priests, by

preachers and by confessors. They cast out devils, as St. Gregory reminds us, as often as they absolve the penitent sinner in confession; they speak in new tongues whenever they proclaim the Gospel of Christ; they take up serpents when enemies are reconciled by their preaching and their exhortations; they drink deadly things without sustaining any injury when they hold intercourse with sinners without being corrupted by them, but on the contrary bringing them to a better mind; they heal the sick when they edify weak brethren by their good example. Reflect on this attentively; if you are a Priest ask yourself what amount of good it is within your power to effect; and if you are a layman, earnestly beseech Almighty God to send us a goodly number of men who are gifted with these spiritual miraculous powers and to fill those whom He has already sent forth with firm confidence in the might entrusted to them.

3d. Consider how you yourself may become one of these spiritual thaumaturgists. St. Bernard says: "We cast out devils whenever we bewail our sins with deep sorrow of heart. We speak with new tongues when we hold holy and hallowed discourse instead of the idle or sinful conversation we have hitherto indulged in. We drive away serpents when we avoid occasions of sin which place themselves in our path, and we drink poison without harm when we are sorely tempted but do not allow ourselves to succumb to the temptation. We lay our hands upon the sick to heal them whenever we chastise our body and practise mortifications for the purpose of overcoming our evil propensities and bad habits." Yes indeed, after this fashion we work yet greater miracles than the early Christians did, for the miracles they performed had reference to the well-being of the material body, whereas our works are conducive to the health of what is incomparably higher and more important, the spiritual, supernatural life. Up then, my soul! Perform all your good works in the name of Jesus, and think where and how this very day you will make use of the powers bestowed on you according to our Lord's promise.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY.

Imagine that you see our Lord taking leave of His disciples. They stand sorrowing around their Master, who is about to depart from them, and He, like a father speaking to his children for the last time, is giving them kind admonitions and addressing to them words of consolation and encouragement.

1st. Consider these words: “Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep but the world shall rejoice.” (St. John xvi. 20.) Herein Christ expresses the vast difference that exists amongst mankind here on earth in regard to their striving after happiness. All desire happiness, all men are of one mind in proposing this as their goal; but oh how different are the ways whereby they endeavor to attain that goal! Whilst some rejoice, others mourn; whilst some seek to reach their goal by paths hedged with roses, others follow hard and thorny roads. The king in the Canticle of Canticles looks for happiness in the embraces of his beloved spouse, whereas St. Alexius, in the same search after happiness, forsakes the bride whom his parents had chosen for him. King Croesus, revelling in his wealth, found satisfaction in gazing upon his piles of gold, whereas St. Francis was inebriated with delight when permitted to seek happiness in the mendicant’s garb. Thus it is everywhere on earth. The votaries of the world pity those who renounce what they deem joys, and the latter regard as objects of commiseration those who surrender themselves to the fascination of those joys. What is the cause of this contrast? It lies in this one word which our Lord spoke: “A little while.”

2d. The disciples said: “What is this that He saith: a little while? we know not what He speaketh.” (v. 18.) It is just the same with ourselves. Because some amongst us do not understand this saying, they do not heed it,

whilst others clearly comprehend its meaning. Some rejoice over the very things at which the others mourn. Oh grasp its import aright, my soul! "Again a little while." All, everything upon earth lasts but a little while. The monarch rejoices in the possession of his bride; again a little while and all his delight is at an end, death comes and takes her from him. Alexius abandons his bride, he leaves his home and his parents; to what a wretched life he condemns himself! Yet "again a little while" and his sorrow is banished; it gives place to eternal happiness. If the world tries to captivate you by its pleasures and its joys, think of these words: "Again a little while"; and if on the other hand the weight of suffering and trial presses on you too heavily, then again let these same words recur to your mind: "A little while."

3d. Finally consider what our Lord said when He spoke for the third time: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." No wonder if your life as a Priest, as a Religious oftentimes seems dreary and joyless when compared to the diversions and amusements of life in the world. No wonder if sometimes you cry out with the short-sighted ones, as the author of the *Imitation* says: "Behold how well such a man lives, how rich he is, how great, how mighty and powerful! But fix thine eyes on heavenly goods and thou wilt see that all these temporal things are no goods at all, but are very uncertain and rather burdensome, because they are never possessed without care and fear." (B. i. ch. 22.) So it truly is, my soul, "your sorrow shall be turned into joy, into everlasting joy." Meditate upon this truth from our Lord's lips; apprehend it in its full depth and meaning, and you will give God thanks that you are permitted to have sorrow here below whilst the world rejoices.

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE PROMISE OUR LORD MADE AFTER HIS RESURRECTION THAT HE WOULD EVER ABIDE AMONGST THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIM.

The time when our Lord was to return to His Father drew nearer and nearer. Endeavor to realize the anxious, mournful state of the disciples' feelings; in losing Jesus they lost their consolation, their strength, in fact all that they valued on earth. However, the risen Saviour comforts them in their tribulation with the promise: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (St. Matt. xxviii. 20.)

1st. Consider the purpose of this promise. Our Lord after His resurrection intends to strengthen His faithful servants that they may not grow wavering and pusillanimous in the season of suffering, when the cross presses upon them. He would have them remember what a mighty Protector and Helper they have at their side; He desires them furthermore to be diligent in the practice of virtue and good works, not forgetful that He is ever near them, that He sees all that they do and rejoices in their acts of virtue. Finally He designs to warn them against sin and wrongdoing, since the thought of His ever-abiding presence must surely prove a powerful deterrent, nay, the most powerful of all deterrents from thoughts and deeds of a reprehensible nature. O most consoling, most invigorating consciousness of the presence of my Saviour! Here we may well quote the beautiful words of the great ascetic: "When Jesus is with us all is well and nothing seems difficult. If Jesus be with thee no enemy can harm thee. Whosoever finds Jesus finds a good treasure, yea, a good above all good." (Imit. B. ii. ch. 8.) If, my soul, mindful of this promise of your risen Lord, you were continually to walk in the presence of your God and Saviour, how patient you would be in

suffering, how strong in temptation, how full of courage and confidence in danger! Why do you think so seldom of His presence? Is it perhaps because you have reason to dread rather than to desire it?

2d. Consider the greatness of this promise. Our Lord does not say that He will send an angel to replace Him, as He once promised Moses that He would do; no, on the contrary He expressly says: "I will Myself be with you, I, your omnipotent, infinite God, under whose protection you will be well defended; I, your victorious Saviour, who triumphed over death, over hell and the devil; I, your Master, of whose boundless power, charity, and bounty you have so often had proof. I will be with you with My grace, My assistance, My consolation. I will be with you not only unseen but visible under the appearance of bread, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar." Ponder this truth, my soul, especially the last point. God is really and actually with you; He is in your house, in your immediate neighborhood, in your heart. Have you so acted, so lived hitherto, have you so spent each day and night as becomes one who can say: Jesus is with me really and actually under the form of bread?

3d. Consider the extent of this promise. "I am with you," thus our risen Lord declares, "all days, even to the consummation of the world." Thus Jesus is perpetually with us. He does not consent to abide with us merely for twenty, thirty years, no, not for a hundred, a thousand years, but for an unlimited period, as long as the world lasts. And as He is with us at all times, so He is with us in all places. Go where we will, our Lord is ever near us. If there is no one near and dear to you, if all have forsaken you, friends and relatives, you are not alone, for Jesus is with you. He is with you in life, and He is with you in death. He never, never abandons you, unless indeed you first abandon Him. Alas! this too often is the case. Our Lord does not deem it too long to abide with us until the consummation of the world, and is it too much for you to continue faithful to Him during the few years of your life in the cloister? He is with you everywhere, yet you

are inclined to forsake Him when obedience calls you to go whither your inclination does not lead you. No, let it not be so, for wheresoever you go, you do not go alone; Jesus is with you; He is always with you, and where He is, as Thomas à Kempis says, there is paradise.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE CONSOLATIONS WHICH OUR LORD IMPARTED TO HIS APOSTLES CONCERNING THE WORK OF THEIR VOCATION.

Picture to yourself the apostles, how on the one hand sorrow and melancholy filled their hearts as the day drew near when their Master would leave them and return to His Father, while on the other hand they felt an increasing fear and timidity at the prospect of the great, the momentous task which lay before them in the fulfilment of their sacred ministry. Yet as we have seen, our Lord had already prepared them for this, and given them grounds of consolation and support. To-day let us consider another of His consolatory utterances.

1st. “The disciple,” He said to them, “is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the servant that he be as his master and the servant as his lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household? Therefore fear them not.” (St. Matt. x. 24-26.) In these words Jesus proposes Himself to them as their example in bearing the contempt and reproach which await His apostles and indeed all His faithful servants. If He, the supreme God, if He, their Lord and Master, if He, Himself consummate sanctity and purity, is accused of being a devil, a glutton and a wine-drinker, one who stirs up sedition among the people, then wonder not, O apostles, think it no hardship, O Christian, if you, His creatures, you, His servants, you, miserable sinners, fare no better. Truly, my soul, if when scorn and upbraiding are your portion,

you remember that your God experienced the very same, you will with the apostles rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

2d. Consider another consolatory utterance from our Lord's lips: "Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known." (v. 26.) Of all the afflictions that fall to the lot of the Christian, not one is so acutely painful as unjust treatment, misconstruction and misrepresentation of what is done from the best and highest motives, slights and slanders. But here again consolation is not wanting. "Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed." Although your innocence may be temporarily obscured and trodden down, although your good name may be aspersed by the calumniator, and your best, your noblest intentions branded as criminal, only have patience, for ere long all shall be revealed and made known. This Jesus, your Judge, the Judge of all mankind, has promised. If He does not accomplish His promise on earth, He will infallibly do so at the last great day of judgment. Then the treachery, the malice of your enemies will be made known to all the world, and your innocence will also be clear as the day. Until that time have patience and lay to heart the precious words we read in the *Imitation of Christ*: "Let not thy peace depend on the tongues of men, for whether they put a good or a bad construction on what thou dost, thou art not therefore another man." (B. iii. ch. 28.)

3d. "He that loseth his life for Me shall find it." (St. Matt. x. 39.) Listen again to our Lord's consolatory words. What does it matter if we lose our life, that is to say, if in this world we endure suffering, tribulations, nay death itself, if here below our life is one of penance, renunciation, mortification? The world, it is true, regards such a life of daily penance as loss, but the Christian, relying on our Lord's promise, can say with the Apostle: "To me to die is gain." (Phil. i. 21.) For I gain by this death in life even here below such peace as the world cannot give and hereafter I shall possess my soul for evermore in glory and felicity that shall never end. Wherefore,

O Christian, if sufferings and afflictions come upon you, do not look around you, do not run hither and thither on earth in search of consolation; open the pages of Holy Scripture, read our Lord's parting discourses, and you will find therein all and more than all that is needed to afford you comfort and allay your fears.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON ANOTHER OF OUR LORD'S CONSOLATORY UTTERANCES.

Set before your mind the great happiness which the apostles had enjoyed up to the period of which we are speaking. They lived in the closest intercourse, the most familiar companionship with our Lord; they sat with Him at table, they accompanied Him on His journeyings through Palestine, they listened to the wondrous doctrines that fell from His lips, they were eye-witnesses of all His marvellous works. And now are they all at once to lose this, are they no longer to enjoy the intimate intercourse, the close association with Jesus? What a grievous loss! Not so; they will rather have reason to say: "Our loss is our true gain;" for only listen to the comforting promises which are made to them.

1st. "If any man love Me, he will keep My word and My Father will love him." (St. John xiv. 23.) This is what our Lord says to His apostles. Hitherto they rejoiced in the love of Jesus, the Son of God; from henceforth they are to take delight in another love, the love of God the Father. O marvellous consolation! Our Lord departs, leaving His disciples behind, leaving them to all appearances orphans; yet behold! at the very time of His departure He makes them far richer, far happier than other men; He gives them a Father. This Father is none other than God Himself, the heavenly Father; a Father too who loves them tenderly as His own children. However our Lord makes one condition: Consider this, my

soul, and ascertain whether that condition is fulfilled in your case; it is this: "If any man love Me and will keep My word."

2d. Consider the further promise our Lord gives to His disciples: "We will come to Him and make our abode with Him." (v. 23.) Up to this time the apostles had lived under one roof with our Lord, and now, when they were to be deprived of that great happiness, He promises them a yet greater, more wondrous, more transcendent privilege: They are to be His dwelling-place, and not His only, but also the dwelling-place of their heavenly Father. O incomprehensible charity of our God! O tremendous dignity of the Christian! To be the abode of the triune God! Impress this truth deeply on your mind to-day; immerse yourself in this ocean of divine love; realize the marvellous ennobling of man, the magnificent recompense which is the guerdon of those who keep the law of God!

3d. Consider in addition what mortal sin is to the Christian. It transforms the dwelling-place of the Most High into an abode of devils. It banishes the three divine Persons of the Holy Trinity and gives ingress to Satan and his hellish crew. It robs the Christian of a privilege which he shares with the angels. It deprives him of a favor which he has in common with the cherubim, namely, the closest, most intimate union with the triune God. Can it possibly be, my soul, that you ever thus expel your God from His dwelling? Yes, this has happened not infrequently; you have driven out the Most High God in order—the thought is almost too horrible to be put into words, but alas! it is only too true—in order to give admittance to the filthiest of beasts, to sin, to the most abhorrent vice. Bewail this prevarication on your part; never weary of doing penance for the past, and let it be the constant theme of your reflections how in atonement for such shameful conduct you may now so order the dwelling-place of your soul as to make it a beauteous, an agreeable temple for your celestial Guest.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON OUR LORD'S ADMONITION IN REGARD TO FRATERNAL CHARITY.

Before leaving His apostles, our Lord laid many injunctions upon them; He had instructed them as to the manner in which they were to preach the Gospel throughout the world, to heal the sick and convert sinners, and given them directions and consolations in regard to their lofty but difficult vocation. Now He gives them a special admonition that has reference to their personal relations to one another. Represent the Saviour to yourself, my soul, in His infinite love, as He stands amongst His disciples, taking leave of them, and urging upon them most emphatically the practice of mutual charity. Listen to the words He is saying to them, and meditate upon those words:

1st. "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." (St. John xv. 12.) Ponder well these words. This is My commandment, the Lord says, not merely My desire, or My will, but My command, which it is sin to transgress. Thus this is a solemn, an urgent, a serious, a last and most touching admonition from the lips of their Lord. Consider further, what love it is which Jesus requires of His disciples. The same He has for them. And what manner of love is that? According to St. Thomas of Aquin our Lord loved us rightly and strongly; rightly, because He loved nothing in us but God, and whatever was conducive to the glory of God; strongly, for He loved us even unto death. Examine yourself, my soul; ask yourself whether you love your Brothers and Sisters in Religion in general, and whether you love them with the same love wherewith Jesus loved them, and which He requires you to show them.

2d. Consider how our Lord had already said on a former occasion: "By this shall all men know that you are My dis-

eiples, if you have love one for another." (St. John xiii. 35.) Our Lord does not say you are My disciples because you pray fervently, because you are pale and emaciated through your frequent fasts and corporal austerities, nor because you are noted for your alms-deeds and other good works, but if you have love one for another; that alone constitutes the distinctive mark of the true followers of Jesus, one which cannot deceive. Our Lord declares charity to be the special livery of His servants. Without it all your fasts and prayers, your mortifications and alms-deeds are nothing, for the Pharisees make a practice of such works. Would that every Christian, and above all every Religious, would lay this truth well to heart. For alas! In that conventional Community where mutual charity is absent, where the eyes one moment raise in languishing love to the crucifix, the next cast malicious glances at the other Sisters; where the lips which have just been singing the praises of God in the choir pour forth a torrent of bitter reproaches on some brother monk; where the pallor of the countenance does not arise wholly from fasting, but from the pangs of envy also, there, sad as it is to relate, the spirit of Christ does not hold sway; there the disciples of Christ are not to be found.

3d. Consider how immediately before enunciating this precept of mutual charity, our Lord says: "Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (St. John xv. 19.) It seems as if by coupling these two sentences together He intended to say: The world hates you quite enough already; do not embitter your life yet more by hating one another. Think over this carefully, my soul. If we who are brethren do not love one another, whom can we expect to love us? Certainly not God, for we are acting in a manner at variance with His first and greatest commandment, and certainly not the world, for it already hates us on account of our religious profession and the habit we wear. But if we love one another, if the sun of mutual charity lights up the walls of our convent, it matters little to us if the world without pursues us with its hatred. Do your utmost therefore, as far

as your influence extends, to promote this mutual charity; and if you perceive that it does not prevail amongst those by whom you are surrounded, oh then be instant in prayer and supplication to the Lord, entreating Him to touch their hearts, and make them obedient to this all-important precept of charity.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE DUTY OF FREQUENT MEDITATION UPON CHRIST'S PASSION.

You have now for some time past taken as the subject of your meditation the joyful, happy incidents connected with the mystery of our Lord's resurrection; and in so doing you have done wisely, for the Apostle Paul declares that the resurrection of Christ is a fact of such infinite importance that without it our faith would be vain. But whilst contemplating this glad event, we must not lose sight of another, that of our Lord's Passion, the principal source of strength, of consolation, of spiritual refreshment and support to the Christian, and pre-eminently to the Priest and Religious. Consider then to-day this duty, this sacred obligation which gratitude imposes on you, of frequently making our Lord's sufferings the theme of your meditation, so that you may not omit from time to time, at least on the Friday of every week, to recall to mind Christ's Passion and death.

1st. Consider how by His Passion our Lord redeemed you from the power of the devil and rescued you from the jaws of death. If you fly for refuge to the Crucified all the powers of hell cannot harm you, and if in your last hour you keep your eyes fixed upon the crucifix, you will not feel the sting of death. Now I ask you, my soul, supposing you were condemned to death, supposing you were already led out to the place of execution, and some one came forward and out of pure charity of-

ferred to undergo death in your stead, nay actually did give his life for yours, could you ever forget such charity, so immense a benefit? Would it be possible for you to let a single day pass by without a grateful remembrance of your benefactor, without a prayer for the repose of his soul? Assuredly not, you will reply; but do not speak too positively; for certainly though it ought not to happen, it is yet too true that you allow weeks to go by without seriously thinking of Him who actually did all that for you, Jesus in His Passion.

2d. Consider that by His Passion our Lord made you a child of God instead of, as you were, a child of the devil. In contemplation of this truth St. Bernard exclaims: "What does us greater honor than that the Son of God should value us so highly as to redeem us by His death and precious blood?" If a monarch were to pay a high price as the ransom of a prisoner, were to take him to his court and load him with honors, would not that be a benefit deserving of eternal gratitude, of eternal remembrance? Now compare, O man, this favor with that bestowed on thee by thy Saviour, who ransomed thee, a wretched captive, with the most costly of all ransoms, His own most precious blood; who did not merely give thee a place at His court, but adopted thee as His child. Reflect on this and weep over thy own thanklessness in so seldom calling to mind the Passion of Christ, thy negligence in acting so little in accordance with the saying of St. Augustine: "There is nothing so salutary, so profitable for the soul, as daily to reflect upon the greatness of the sufferings the God-man endured for us."

3d. Consider how vast an amount of pain, of labor, of toil our Lord bore for us in His Passion. If it was only meet and right that Tobias should exhort his son to honor his mother, to be mindful of how great perils she had suffered for him; if the poor galley-slave never forgot the benefit conferred on him by St. Vincent of Paul, when the latter took his place on the bench, to relieve him of his terrible labor and fatigue, how is it possible that you can ever forget what your suffering Lord

did for you? He gave you new birth upon the cross amid pangs far sharper than those of any mother, and for your deliverance, for you who were condemned to hell, He imposed on Himself labor more arduous, toil incomparably greater than Vincent underwent for the sake of a convict. Listen, my soul. St. Francis was one day walking not far from the chapel of the Portiuncula, weeping and sighing bitterly. He was met by a servant of God who was acquainted with him, and who seeing him to be in such distress and affliction, imagined that some misfortune had befallen him. But when he asked him what was the matter, the saint replied: "The reason why I weep and sigh is this; because my Lord in His perfect innocence suffered so much, and men who are the cause of His sufferings think so little of the immense obligation they are under to Him and the great gratitude they owe Him." If the saint were to behold you, what would he think of you who are his Son perhaps, or his Daughter? Would he cease weeping, or would his tears flow yet more freely?

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON HOLY POVERTY.

You have already, my soul, seen in your meditations how perfectly our Lord practised poverty throughout His whole life from its very beginning to its end, how He sanctified poverty in the crib and on the cross. Now you are called upon to observe that after He had risen from the dead He displayed the same love of poverty, the same esteem and preference for it. You will see that it was not to Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man, nor to the principal and wealthiest inhabitants of Jerusalem that He appeared, but to the poor apostles and a few lowly women. And to them He did not appear as a great and glorious monarch, though this He really was, but He showed Himself to Mary Magdalen in the guise of a hum-

ble gardener; He was met by the disciples on the way to Emmaus as a homeless traveller, and the apostles saw Him standing on the shores of the lake of Genesareth as a destitute stranger, asking for food. Thus after His resurrection our Lord practised the doctrine which He taught previously to it: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (St. Matt. v. 3.)

1st. Consider that our Lord does not say in general: Blessed are the poor, but: Blessed are the poor in spirit; those therefore who, as St. Hilary remarks, have actually left all temporal things of their own free will, who keep their heart and their unruly passions so well in check that they desire nothing; and such persons, as the saint adds, are few in number. Few they are indeed! The great majority of men, including a goodly number of Religious, are, it is true, externally poor, but in their hearts they are by no means detached from the things of the world. Consequently they are only poor in appearance, and have no right to bear the name of monk. It is to such individuals that St. Vincent refers when he says: "It is nothing to be poor unless poverty be loved, and all the hardships involved in it are borne cheerfully for the love of Christ." But, you will perhaps rejoin, I have left the things of the world both in will and in deed, and I cherish no attachment to superfluities. This may be so, but there is another question you must ask yourself.

2d. Ask yourself whether you have not too great an attachment to necessary things, whether you are not too solicitous lest aught should be lacking to you of what is needful, too anxious that you should be well fed, well clothed, comfortably lodged; whether, moreover, you do not begin to complain if you have not all that you want? If this be so, you have not the true spirit of poverty. St. Bernard most justly says: "It is extremely painful to see how many in the present day boast of the name of poverty and yet only want to embrace poverty in order to be well provided for and enjoy all manner of comforts. That is not being poor; it is being well off,

richer in fact than many persons living in the world." These latter may perhaps have more which they can call their own, but they have far less ease and comfort. Wherefore if you do not wish to fail in your vocation, which is based on holy poverty, consider what poverty of spirit really is.

3d. Perfect poverty of spirit consists in bearing cheerfully all the trials and privations which a life of poverty brings with it. We are poor in spirit, both when we suffer the want of necessaries, and also when we reduce indispensable necessities to the narrowest limits. "If any one desires to know whether he is poor in spirit," says the Ven. Rodriguez, "let him search into his own heart, and see whether he loves the ordinary consequences and usual effects of poverty, such as hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, the want of proper habiliments; whether he is glad when his habit is shabby and worn out, when he has not something that he would like at table, when the cell appointed for him is badly furnished and uncomfortably arranged. For if you do not rejoice at such things, if you endeavor to elude what is disagreeable instead of embracing it, it is a proof that you have not yet attained perfect poverty of spirit. Wherefore, my soul, imagine yourself lying in your cell at the point of death, look upwards to your Lord hanging in His poverty upon the cross, and remember that you took a solemn vow to follow Him in His poverty. Then, meditating on this fact, turn your eyes upon your own person, the couch whereon you rest at night, the habit you wear, the furniture of your cell, the pictures and books about you; and if while you make this mental survey of your surroundings you see anything calculated to reproach you, anything which in your contemplation of death appears likely to render your last hour less easy, oh delay not, but this very day eliminate that object whatever it may be, that when death really comes there may be nothing for you to regret in regard to your observance of holy poverty.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH WHOM OUR LORD PROMISES US
IN THE GOSPEL FOR TO-DAY.

Represent to yourself the grief the apostles felt after our Lord had announced to them that the time had come for Him to depart from them; and how a new source of consolation was immediately opened to them, how fresh consolation inundated their souls, when our Lord promised to send another Comforter who should abide with them forever, the Spirit of truth.

1st. Our Lord calls this Holy Spirit pre-eminently a Paraclete, a Comforter. He is indeed most truly a Comforter, for all that the personal presence of Jesus effected, all the anticipated loss of which the apostles lamented so keenly, is continually produced within our hearts by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As our Lord was in the first instance, so now the Holy Spirit is our Teacher who initiates us into the truths of Christ; He is now the Light who enlightens and kindles our hearts; the Holy Spirit is the Comforter of the afflicted, exactly as our Lord was, and like Him again, He is the strength of the weak. St. Bernard, speaking of the holy Paraclete, says: "He gives to the faithful the pledge of salvation, the light of knowledge, the fortitude of the spiritual life. That which is impossible to nature, becomes possible and even easy with the assistance of His grace." The apostles were the first to discover by their own experience that the Holy Spirit who was promised to them was in very truth a Paraclete, for they who previous to His coming were so weak, so pusillanimous, so wavering, were, after they had received the Holy Ghost, strong, courageous, and so steadfast in faith as to become immovable pillars of the Church. If this change has not taken place in you, my soul, examine yourself, ask yourself whether this is not due to your having sought another comforter, not the Holy Ghost.

2d. Consider that in to-day's Gospel our Lord speaks of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of truth. As Satan is the father and fosterer of lies, so the Holy Ghost is the Author, the Promoter of truth. He is the Teacher of the pure unadulterated truth, who cannot deceive; He instructs us in the matters of our salvation, and as the sun's rays dispel the mists, so His light banishes the clouds of ignorance and error. It is His office to impart the right knowledge of divine things and the mysteries of the faith, and to give a right understanding of the Holy Scriptures. What would become of our Church without this Spirit of truth? what would have become of ourselves, exposed as we are to the subtle, deceitful, incessant attacks of the spirit of darkness and falsehood? How could we have withstood them? Whence comes so much error, so many transgressions and scandals? They arise hence: because the great bulk of mankind—and you perhaps amongst the number—instead of being led by the Spirit of truth, allow themselves to be guided by the lying, deceitful, treacherous spirit of the world, the spirit of the carnal man, the spirit of self-love. Make a resolution not to take a single step in the future in matters concerning your salvation, without having previously implored our Lord to grant you the Spirit of truth whom He to-day promises to us. Do this, and you will soon find your faults and failings to be fewer, your mistakes less frequent.

3d. Consider that our Lord says further of this Spirit: "The Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive." (St. John xiv. 17.) By the world is here meant idle, voluptuous, sinful men. In reference to such persons St. Gregory writes: "The Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts the desire for invisible, supernatural riches; thus since the heart of worldlings only cares for visible, temporal possessions, the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit; for the more eagerly the desires of the earthly-minded crave for those things that are external and visible, the more unfit they become to receive the Holy Spirit." Ponder this, my soul. Scrutinize your own heart to-day; ask yourself whither your longings tend and perhaps you may

discover the reason why you have kept the feast of Pentecost for so many years without perceiving the action of the Holy Ghost within you; and you may perhaps be more likely to make it your earnest endeavor that it may be otherwise with you when you celebrate the approaching day of Pentecost.

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE GLORIOUS MEMORIAL WHICH OUR LORD LEFT WITH US WHEN HE DEPARTED FROM US.

When the apostles were sore distressed at the thought of being for the future deprived of the personal presence of our Lord, in His wondrous love He provided for them an alleviation of their sorrow by leaving behind Him a memorial of Himself, by means of which they could still continue to have the joy of His personal presence with them. This memorial is the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, the holy sacrifice of the Mass. It is a memorial wherein the life and Passion of our Lord is perpetually renewed and reenacted before our eyes.

1st. Reflect, my soul, how often you regretfully say to yourself: Would that I had lived during the period of our Lord's sojourn upon earth, would that I had been able like Zacheus to invite Him into my house, to touch His garments as did the woman who had an issue of blood! But what reason have you to lament thus? Not only are you privileged to touch His garments, but His most sacred body; you are able not merely to invite Him into your house, but to receive Him into your heart, and this you can do in the memorial of His Passion and death, in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, in the Sacrament of the Altar. By assisting at Mass, you hold daily intercourse with Jesus; from the altar He breaks bread to you, just as He did to the disciples at Emmaus; thence He shows you the marks of His wounds just as He did to

Thomas; thence He salutes you in the same manner as He did the apostles in the upper room at Jerusalem, with the words: "Peace be unto you." If therefore you desire to see the risen Saviour there is no necessity for you to go as the disciples once did to Galilee—go and hear holy Mass, and there you will meet not only your risen Lord, but you will have a representation of His whole life on earth.

2d. Consider how holy Mass places before our eyes the whole life of our Lord. You are transported to the crib at Bethlehem when you hear the Gloria in Excelsis which the angels sang at His birth. You behold the Redeemer in His character of Teacher when the Epistle and Gospel are read. The lavabo reminds you of the sentence of condemnation which was the beginning of our Lord's Passion. You keep your mind fixed upon His Passion and death, renewed upon the altar without shedding of blood, from the offertory until the Communion; and at the Communion you are reminded of the risen Saviour dispensing bread to His disciples, while at the last blessing you remember the parting benediction He gave before His ascension into Heaven. Ponder this well, and you will see how in all the separate and individual ceremonies of holy Mass the life of our Lord is placed before your eyes, and His Passion and death are actually renewed in it; then you will assuredly assist at the holy sacrifice or celebrate it from this day forth with much greater devotion than heretofore.

3d. Consider how essential to the Christian is this memorial of the life and Passion of our Lord. "You need but to take away," thus writes the devout Abbot Rupert, "the daily commemoration of our Saviour's death in the holy sacrifice of the Mass from the worship of the faithful, and you will soon perceive of what use it was. All that is now kept in constant and lively remembrance in the Christian Church would fall out of mind. Charity would grow cold, faith would grow dull, hope would begin to waver, for then the blood shed by Jesus Christ, the innocent Abel, would no longer cry to Heaven in

propitiation for the sins of mankind." Reflect upon this, my soul; try to realize what it would be if the holy sacrifice were no longer offered; you will thus learn to prize more highly the immense benefit of this perpetual memorial of our Lord, and as often as you celebrate it, or assist at it, you will make it your earnest petition that this oblation may be offered ere long in every part of the earth, more especially in those distant lands whither your Brethren go as missionaries.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON HOLY MASS, AS THE SACRIFICE MOST WORTHY OF OUR GOD.

Imagine, my soul, that it is now that great and awful moment in the solemn celebration of High Mass, when heart and mind are raised above earth, when every knee is bent, every head is bowed, while the Priest elevates the most holy body of Jesus Christ for the adoration of the faithful. What an impressive moment! What are all other sacrifices, the sacrifices of Jews and heathen in comparison with the one Christian sacrifice? Truly, holy Mass stands alone as the sacrifice most worthy of our God.

1st. Consider that many and manifold sacrifices were offered to God under the Old Dispensation, in order to honor and worship Him as the Supreme Deity, in recognition of man's subjection to Him and in acknowledgment of man's guiltiness in His sight. Thus the Jews offered burnt offerings to praise and venerate the divine glory and majesty; sacrifices of atonement to implore forgiveness of sins; peace offerings to entreat the bestowal of special graces, and thank offerings in gratitude for favors and benefits received. Who can form an idea of the immense number of animals that were slaughtered, the multitude of priests who officiated at the altar, the manifold and multifarious ceremonies that were observed

at those sacrifices! And yet despite the number of the oblations, the elaborate ceremonial, hear what the prophet Micheas very truly says: "What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy? Wherewith shall I kneel before the high God? Shall I offer holocausts unto Him, and calves of a year old? May the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams or with many thousands of fat he goats?" (Mich. vi. 6, 7.) No indeed, there is only one sacrifice worthy of the Most High God, one oblation which outweighs and surpasses all others, and that is holy Mass. Reflect my soul, on the vast magnitude of this sacrifice.

2d. Consider why holy Mass is pre-eminently the sacrifice most worthy to be offered to our God. Because God is infinite, and therefore deserving of infinite honor, of an oblation infinite in its nature. Where in the whole world would it be possible to find such an oblation, were it not that our Lord has left us in holy Mass a perpetual memorial of His infinite sacrifice upon the cross? In it alone we have a sacrifice of infinite value, consequently a sacrifice worthy of the Deity, for the Victim therein offered is of infinite, of divine nature. Weigh well, my soul, this grand, this sublime truth, and you will no longer wonder that St. Laurence Justinian should say that at the time of the celebration of holy Mass the heavens are opened, the angels look down in amazement, the saints open their lips to praise and magnify God, the just rejoice, the suffering souls are released, hell mourns and the whole Catholic Church is made glad. But there is one thing at which you may wonder, that any one can remain cold and indifferent at such a time, as you too often do.

3d. Consider that the reason why holy Mass is the only sacrifice really worthy to be offered to God is not merely because the oblation itself is infinite in its nature, but also He by whom it is offered. For He who officiates at the altar is none other than Christ Himself. The Priest who celebrates Mass does so only in the name of Christ, by virtue of Christ's authority, as the minister of Christ. He who first instituted the holy sacrifice, who

said the first Mass in the cenaculum at Jerusalem, who offered Himself up on the cross upon Mount Calvary, He it is who now at one and the self-same time is Priest and Victim in the holy Mass. He it is whom the Eternal Father sees in the celebrant; He looks not upon the Priest, who is the instrument, and who, without detriment to the efficacy of the sacrifice, may be sinful, nay, even quite unworthy of his office. Whenever therefore, my soul, you see the Priest at the altar, imagine that you see Christ Himself offering the sacred oblation, and you will experience no difficulty in assisting at Mass with the devotion St. John Chrysostom requires from the faithful. "When you stand before the altar," he says, "do not think that you are in the presence of men. Realize that presence of countless hosts of angels and archangels who are beside and around you, and who tremble with awe before the sovereign Lord of Heaven and earth. Be silent, therefore," he adds, "let your minds be filled with respect and veneration; remember how retiring, how circumspect and careful courtiers are in their behavior when in the presence of their monarch; learn of them the respect, the veneration that ought to mark your conduct when you are there where God Himself is present."

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON HOLY MASS AS A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT.

In beginning your meditation to-day represent to yourself the unspeakable trouble, the really touching efforts which were made by mankind before the coming of Christ to obtain reconciliation with God. Think how the blood of oxen and heifers, of calves and sheep cried daily to Heaven for mercy; how in their distress men even went so far as to put their brethren, nay, their own children to death, to slay them as sacrificial victims, hoping thereby to appease the Almighty, whereas in reality they only in-

creased their guilt. There was only one oblation capable of effecting this atonement in its fullest extent, the sacrifice of the cross, perpetuated in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

1st. Consider that the sacred sacrifice of the cross, renewed and continued in the Mass, possesses the greatest expiatory virtue, for the Victim offered is Christ Himself, of whom St. John says: "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." (I. Ep. St. John ii. 2.) And the Council of Trent declares that this holy sacrifice is a true sacrifice of atonement, so that whosoever is present at it with a sincere heart, with real faith, with fear and reverence, with compunction and profound contrition, will find mercy and forgiveness. And although holy Mass does not directly remit mortal sin as it does venial sin, yet it has power to awaken in those who are in mortal sin such deep penitence that this, being supernatural in its character, cleanses from sin, and at any rate is calculated to incite the sinner to betake himself thither, where he can obtain remission of sin, to the holy Sacrament of Penance. This marvellous effect produced by holy Mass will not surprise you when you consider further:

2d. That just as men are oftentimes induced to condone a wrong or an injury which was committed against them in consideration of some service rendered them or some gift presented to them, so in like manner Almighty God allows Himself to be appeased by this highest, most magnificent offering, the sacrifice of holy Mass. Consider moreover: How was it that the thief upon the cross was so suddenly touched with compunction, and forthwith was promised paradise as his portion? It was by virtue of the holy sacrifice which inspired him with such deep contrition and so firm a faith that from a robber he immediately became a saint. Now the same Son of God who once offered upon the cross that all-powerful oblation, offers it now in the holy Mass; consequently the sacrifice which is daily offered upon our altars has the same infinite value and tremendous efficacy as that which was

offered upon Calvary. Thus holy Church justly says: "As often as the commemoration of this sacrificial lamb is celebrated, the work of our redemption is accomplished." Now ask yourself, my soul, how often, if you are a Priest, during the ten, twenty, thirty or forty years that have elapsed since your ordination you have offered this efficacious sacrifice of atonement, or if a layman, how many times you have assisted at holy Mass, and yet perhaps you have scarcely ever rightly appreciated the vast power of expiation which flows therefrom upon all who are desirous of receiving it.

3d. Consider that holy Mass is consequently the best preparation for Holy Communion. In the first place it cleanses you from all the lesser faults and stains of sin which yet cling to you; in the second place it is a source of grace whence you can with greater facility than elsewhere draw the divine assistance which you need for the worthy reception of the sacrament, the devotion and reverence which are requisite and which you cannot of yourself acquire; finally what could be better calculated to cause your heart to melt in bitter tears of contrition, to inspire it with firm, child-like confidence, to kindle within it the flame of holy, fervent, glowing charity, the dispositions proper for a worthy Communion, than that you should whilst hearing Mass imagine yourself to be standing beneath the cross whereon your Saviour hangs bathed in blood, enduring excruciating torture? Yes indeed, if in spirit you embrace with Magdalen the cross whereon the Lord Jesus is fastened, if you feel dropping on you the blood your God sheds for you, you must unquestionably have a heart of stone if you do not, overflowing with contrition and charity, exclaim in St. Francis' words: "Jesus my love, my God and my all!" Since dispositions such as these are certainly the best and most suitable for Holy Communion, endeavor to gain them by always, if you possibly can, devoutly hearing Mass before you approach the holy table.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY
AFTER EASTER.

ON HOLY MASS AS A PEACE-OFFERING.

Only think what a vast multitude of entreaties and prayers ascend day by day from earth to Heaven! Who could attempt to form any estimate of their number? Now if you were standing before the king's palace, and saw hundreds standing there before you, waiting to present their petitions to the monarch, an uneasy fear might well arise in your mind; you might ask yourself anxiously how you ever should be able to penetrate into the king's presence and lay your needs before him. Under such circumstances how glad you would be to meet with a powerful friend, who would introduce you into the audience-hall and present your petition to the king. Now our Lord in holy Mass is the influential friend who intercedes for you with the King of Heaven.

1st. Consider that if you were desirous of obtaining a favor from your sovereign, the best and surest means would be to apply to the monarch through one of the royal princes. If therefore when you implore some grace from the celestial King, you implore it in and through holy Mass, then it is the King's own well-beloved Son who presents your petitions to His heavenly Father. O what a mighty intercessor we have in Him! Surely if God has already bestowed on you so many graces and benefits unasked, unsought, it is not likely that He will reject your petition if you address yourself to Him through His own Son. When Abraham was about to slay his son Isaac at the divine command, God could not refrain from making this promise to him: "I will bless thee and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven." (Gen. xxii. 17.) When David offered holocausts and peace-offerings the Lord stayed the pestilence that He had sent upon the people of Israel. When Onias the high priest offered sacrifice for Heliodorus' restoration to health God heard and

granted his prayer; and can we think that He will reject your petition and withhold His benediction from you, if His only Son offers Himself up on your behalf and for your necessities? Remember this, O Christian; and especially you who have the care of souls, remember it when the duties of your pastoral office press upon you heavily.

2d. Consider that all good works receive a recompense from God and are repaid with graces. But if you put together all the good works which are or have been performed by ordinary men or by the saints, such as prayers, almsgiving, fasts, austerities, works of penance and of charity, all these taken as a whole do not surpass in value and in merit the holy sacrifice of the Mass. This sublime act of worship must therefore have wondrous graces and blessings attached to it, and well may St. Laurence Justinian exclaim in ecstatic amazement at the efficacy and virtue of the peace-offering of the New Testament: "There is no oblation greater, more profitable to man, more acceptable to God than this holy sacrifice. It gives glory to God, joy to the angels, peace to the nations; it opens Heaven to the weary pilgrim, it sheds light upon the understanding, it sustains the hope of the laborer and guides the wanderer into the right way." Alas! how often do we stand beside this fount of grace without drinking of its waters! how often do we approach this fire without warming ourselves at its glow!

3d. Consider how you can obtain graces not only for yourself but also for others, especially for the holy souls, by virtue of this sacrifice. For this reason the Church is accustomed twice during the Mass, both before and after the consecration, in a memento to commemorate her children living and dead. When St. Francis Borgia celebrated Mass, he always pursued the following method: After having spent a short time in meditating upon the fact that it was in very truth the sacrifice of the cross which he was preparing to offer or at which he was about to assist, he laid all his petitions in the five wounds of Christ. In the wound of the right hand he commended to God the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops and all the clergy; in the

wound of the left hand the ruler of the country and the secular authorities; in the wound of the right foot all the ecclesiastical and Religious Orders, especially the one of which he was a member; in the left foot his relatives, friends, benefactors, and those individuals for whom his prayers had been particularly asked. The wound in the side he reserved for himself; to it he withdrew, hiding himself as Holy Scripture says: "In the clifts of the rock and the hollow places of the wall." (Cant. ii. 14.) At the memento for the dead he observed a similar course. Act in like manner, my soul, and consider: If our Lord died upon the cross for all mankind, it will be peculiarly pleasing to Him if at the holy sacrifice you do not pray exclusively for yourself, but for all men, for the living and for the dead. And if you desire to obtain some grace and ask it at the holy Mass, you will be far more certain to receive it if beforehand, by praying for others, you have rendered yourself well-pleasing in God's sight, for that is no empty promise that He made: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." (St. Matt. v. 7.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON HOLY MASS AS THE MOST WORTHY THANK-OFFERING.

Picture to yourself, my soul, the holocaust which Noe offered after the deluge as a thank-offering to the Most High God in gratitude for his wonderful deliverance out of the terrible inundation that covered the face of the earth. So acceptable was that sacrifice to God, that to testify His satisfaction He immediately placed the beauteous bow with its sevenfold hues in the clouds above. Now if this oblation of animals, sacrificed by a sinful man, was so well pleasing a thank-offering, how far more acceptable must the holy Mass be, since that alone is a sacrifice sufficient to pay to God the tribute of thanks which is His due.

1st. When David was on one occasion recalling to mind the numerous benefits he had already received from God, he exclaimed: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered unto me? I will take the chalice of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxv. 12, 13.) You, my soul, should do the same; consider the countless, the inconceivable benefits of God, who created and who continually preserves you and the whole world; who redeemed you and all mankind, redeemed you at so immense a cost, and who sanctifies you continually by means of the holy sacraments; who in addition to this bestows on you and on the whole world innumerable favors and graces, spiritual and material. Do this and of a certainty you will feel compelled to cry with the Royal Psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord?" And see, you also can do nothing better than take the chalice of salvation, that is to say offer that sacred sacrifice to which the name of Eucharist, signifying thanksgiving, is applied, and in which not a sinful man, but the only and well-beloved Son of God gives thanks to His heavenly Father on your behalf in the only adequate and fitting manner.

2d. Consider that Christ Himself first gave us the example of this manner of giving thanks. For when He said the first Mass, before pronouncing the words which effected the miraculous transformation of the bread and wine, He raised His eyes to heaven and gave thanks, for the purpose of teaching us, as St. Chrysostom remarks, that this sacrifice is intended to be to us not simply a remembrance of His Passion, not simply an expiatory commemoration of His death, but pre-eminently a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Thus in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, following our Lord's example, we ought to offer His most sacred body and blood to His heavenly Father with deepest reverence in thanksgiving for His benefits; whilst with the utmost fervor of our hearts we implore Him to accept our oblation, saying: O Eternal Father, in union with this offering of thanks by Thy only begotten Son, which He presented to Thee before the

transubstantiation of the bread into His sacred body and of the wine into His precious blood, I offer Thee this holy sacrifice, beseeching Thee to accept it in return for the benefits Thou hast conferred on me and on the whole world. Only think how many sins day by day cry aloud to Heaven; think how many petitions hour after hour ascend to the throne of God on high, and think how few words of thanksgiving! Endeavor, my soul, to compensate for this lack of gratitude by offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass as an oblation of thanks.

3d. Consider that not only is the holy sacrifice of the Mass the best, because the only infinite thank-offering that can be presented to God, it is also the most touching and most fitting expression of thanks. For gratitude shows itself in the most touching and beautiful manner by this, that it continually remembers its benefactor with feelings of warm affection, and dwells in thought upon what it owes to him. Now holy Mass is, as we know, the perpetual remembrance of our greatest Benefactor, our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is the most affecting memorial of that act wherein the divine love and goodness towards us reached its climax, the bitter Passion and death of the Saviour. Rouse yourself therefore, my soul. Study with more attention than heretofore this most touching and beautiful means of rendering thanks to your all-bountiful God, and resolve that you will now and again offer one of the many Masses which you have the privilege of hearing as a tribute of praise and thanksgiving.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON MARY STANDING BENEATH THE CROSS.

Since you have hitherto been contemplating in pious meditation the sacrifice of the cross perpetuated as it is in holy Mass, to-day, the day of the week dedicated to the Blessed Mother of God, cast your eyes upon Mary standing

beneath the cross for the sake of learning from her example how one ought to assist at holy Mass. Imagine that you see her, how with glowing devotion and keen grief she witnesses the first, the great sacrifice of the Mass offered with shedding of blood, not as now, in an unbloody manner.

1st. Consider how few souls there were who with deep piety and heartfelt compassion were present at the sacrifice of Christ, who is High Priest for ever. John is there, and Magdalen and a few women, and prominent among them all the holy Mother of God herself. Those only join in celebrating the sublime sacrifice of the cross who love our Lord most tenderly; they stand beside the cross; they alone assist in pious devotion at the great oblation, and amongst them the most holy Virgin holds the first and foremost place. Look upon her, see with what tender devotion she fixes her tear-dimmed eyes on the sacred Victim bathed in blood; look at her devotion beside yours, and reflect how far removed your love for the Crucified must be from hers, if your piety will not bear comparison with hers.

2d. Consider that the Blessed Virgin stood for three whole consecutive hours beneath the cross, a witness of the oblation her divine Son made of Himself, although she had to endure many a taunt and scornful speech from the brutal soldiers, although many a vicious, envenomed glance was directed against her by the Pharisees, and the sight of her suffering Jesus filled her heart with inexpressible anguish. Mary's soul overflowed with love of the crucified Redeemer, and love gives strength and fortitude to bear all things. Had you more love, my soul, you would assuredly not be so tepid, so indifferent in regard to the holy sacrifice. Moreover it costs you nothing to hear Mass, it does not expose you, as Mary was exposed, to contempt and derision, to the hatred of others, to keen grief of heart, and consequently your tepidity and carelessness are all the more inexcusable.

3d. Consider that Mary, while present at the sacrifice of her Son upon the cross, was so absorbed in devout contemplation that she did not appear so much as to notice

what went on around her; in spirit she was nailed to the cross with her Son, transfixed by three mystic nails. The first nail was a vivid conception of the pain her Son endured and which she shared with Him, suffering with Him, His agony piercing her soul like a sharp-edged sword. The second nail that fastened her to the cross with Christ was the lively faith wherewith she gazed on the sacred Victim, which enabled her to see in the pitiable, mangled form extended on the cross her God and Lord, her merciful Redeemer, the Saviour of all mankind. The third nail was her maternal affection, which only saw before her her suffering Child, and, heeding not soldiers and Pharisees, concentrated itself with tenderest compassion on the one object, her crucified Son. O let your soul also be fastened to the cross with these three nails; when you are present at holy Mass represent to yourself the sufferings of your Lord in vivid colors; firmly grasp by faith the fact that it is your God, your Redeemer who offers Himself up upon the altar; give Him all the love of your heart, let the world, the flesh, your fellow creatures have no place in your affections, and doubtless you will find that you will experience many fewer distractions in hearing Mass, your devotion will be far more fervent, and you will derive greater profit from it than you have done heretofore.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON PRAYER.

Imagine, my soul, that you see before you our Lord in His character of divine Teacher, delivering the discourse contained in to-day's Gospel. Fancy yourself standing amongst His hearers, listening with devout attention to the consolatory words which fall from His lips.

1st. "Ask and you shall receive." (St. John xvi. 24.) This is what our Lord says in to-day's Gospel; already on a former occasion He said: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be

opened unto you." (St. Matt. vii. 7.) Think seriously who it is who proclaims this truth. It is Jesus, the Son of God, He who knows better than any one can know how bountiful, how kind God the Father is towards us poor needy mortals, how ready He is to help us. What a consolation, what an encouragement to persevere in prayer it is to know, and to know on the testimony of His own Son, that our heavenly Father never grows weary of listening to our petitions; I may knock when I will and where I will, I am permitted to ask and to seek as often as I like, and when I ask I shall receive, when I seek I shall find, and when I knock, I shall meet with a door open before me. Rise up then, my soul! From this time forth pray with greater earnestness, with more confidence than heretofore, and you will more often receive a favorable answer to your supplications.

2d. Consider the comparison of which our Lord makes use in order to augment our confidence. "What man is there among you," He says, "of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? or if he shall ask him a fish, shall he reach him a serpent?" (St. Matt. vii. 9, 10.) Ponder this parable. Men, ordinarily so crafty, deceitful and false, cannot bring themselves to refuse anything reasonable to their own children; they will not deny them the food they require or give them anything that would be hurtful to them, and can it be imagined that our heavenly Father, who is goodness and love personified, would act otherwise towards us His children? Wherefore ask with perfect trust; pray especially in these Rogation days for yourself and for all men; present your fervent petitions to your Father reminding Him of these words which His Son uttered and on which we are meditating to-day, and He will assuredly hear you. But you will perhaps say: "My prayers have so often not been heard." Do not let this discourage you.

3d. Consider that God is your Father. How often a child screams and cries for something, begs his father with tears to give him something, and the parent refuses the child's request, not because he does not love him, or be-

cause his tears awaken in him no compassion, but either because what the child asks may be prejudicial to him, or because the father has good reasons for delaying to grant the petition, since he considers that at a later period it will be more beneficial to the suppliant, or he desires that the child should ask it more urgently. Oh how often we pray to our heavenly Father like foolish children, and well it is for us that for reasons similar to those attributed to the earthly parent He does not receive our prayer, or postpones answering it until a later period. Consider your past life, and ask yourself whether you do not find this truth corroborated by your own experience. Learn then from your meditation to-day not to desist so soon from your supplications if the answer to them be long delayed; and learn also submissively to adore the wisdom of your God if He altogether withholds from you the favor you implore.

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE SPOT WHENCE OUR LORD'S ASCENSION TOOK PLACE.

Recall to mind, my soul, as briefly as possible the mournful scene you beheld enacted on the last occasion when you in imagination were present on Mount Olivet, when you witnessed the agony of your Redeemer, the treachery of Judas, the flight of the apostles. Now when you return thither, as you are invited to do to-day, what a different picture meets your meditative eye! Let us proceed to contemplate it.

1st. You do not see a few apostles slumbering at a short distance from our Lord, who is wrestling in His death-agony, but a joyous, gladsome multitude surrounding the risen Saviour in all the splendor of His glorified body. They do not behold Him, as at that time, prostrate upon the ground, grovelling in the dust, but resplendent with glory ascending from earth to the kingdom of Heaven.

Oh how quickly, how marvellously everything has been changed! Sadness has given place to intense joy, fear is superseded by untroubled hope, great consolation succeeds uneasy apprehension. The life of Christ upon earth was, it is true, hard, arduous, sorrowful; but see now that it is at an end, now that Heaven is soon to be entered, how bright, how serene, how joyous it becomes! Wherefore take heart, O Christian, you who now mourn and weep in this valley of tears. When the day comes whereon your sad life also reaches its close and Heaven opens to receive you, then all will be bright and clear, all will be pure, unmixed joy and felicity. And in order that this may be your portion, there is something more to be considered.

2d. It was not without design that our Lord chose Mount Olivet as the place whence He should ascend into Heaven; it was the mountain where He had spent so much time in prayer, where He had fought many a spiritual conflict, where He had begun His Passion, and where He had yielded Himself in complete submission to the will of God. If you, my soul, hope one day also to ascend into Heaven forget not that your ascension can only take place from the Mount of Olives, that is to say, at the close of a life in which you have with our Lord prayed much, struggled much, suffered much, resisted much, and abandoned yourself unreservedly to the will of God. Ask yourself whether this has been the case with you hitherto, for then you will be able yourself to reply to another question of which you doubtless would gladly know the answer; whether it will be one day said of you: He has ascended into Heaven.

3d. Consider that the Evangelist St. Luke adds: "He led them out as far as Bethania." (ch. xxiv. v. 50.) According to this the exact spot of our Lord's ascension was the central summit of the mount, over which the road led to Bethania. This circumstance is not without a special meaning. Bethania signifies "the house of obedience," and it is from the spot where the road leads to this "house of obedience" that our Lord's ascension takes place. How consoling this fact is for you, and how full of instruction! You are in the "house of obedience."

Every Religious house is one, and every Priest is subject to the authority of his Bishop. You have therefore taken the right road by which to go up to Heaven; it only rests with you to walk on this way, for it is not enough to have entered upon the road that leads to some place, in order to reach your destination. You must proceed along that road; that is, you must practise the virtue of obedience. If you could ask the thousands of happy souls who have already accomplished their blissful ascension into Heaven by what way one can most easily, most peacefully, most surely reach the celestial mansions, all would give you the same answer; they would say: "By the way that leads to Bethania, by the way of simple, humble obedience." Do you find that way very hard, very repugnant to nature? If so, by what other means do you propose to get to Heaven?

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE REASONS WHY OUR LORD ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN.

Ponder, my soul, on the sublimity of that moment when our Lord was about to ascend into Heaven; to leave the earth to which He had come down three and thirty years previously, the earth which He had illuminated with the light of faith, and which He had redeemed with His precious blood. Now, at the close of His earthly career, how grand, how glorious was that which awaited Him!

1st. Consider that our Lord ascends into Heaven for the purpose of giving an account to His heavenly Father of the great work He had accomplished upon earth. "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee." (St. John xvii. 4, 5.) Thus our Lord spoke after the Last Supper, and with the same beautiful words upon His lips He will enter the presence

of His Father. How well pleasing may we conclude this to have been to the heavenly Father! how great must have been the satisfaction He manifested in His Son and in the work that Son had accomplished!

On your part, my soul, propose to yourself this question: If now, if this very day you were summoned to appear before your Father in Heaven to give an account of your life on earth, could you also say in our Lord's words: "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do"?

2d. Consider that our Lord ascends into Heaven for the purpose of receiving, in His character of God-man, the recompense of all He had done and merited upon earth. In Heaven He was to be raised above all because on earth He had abased Himself below all; there, instead of being stretched on the cross of shame, He was to sit down upon the throne of divine majesty; there, instead of being placed between two thieves, He was to be surrounded by countless hosts of angels; there, instead of the scorn and mockery of men, His ears would be greeted by hosannas from the voices of thousands of cherubim and seraphim, and His name, nailed in ignominy to the wood of the cross, was there to be proclaimed as the "name which is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (Phil. ii. 9-10.) Rejoice, my soul, with all your heart at the glory into which your Redeemer enters; but also rejoice at the shame, the abjection, the sufferings and tribulations which you endure here below; for the greater the afflictions you have to bear in this world, the greater the happiness and glory which, like our Lord, you may anticipate as your portion hereafter.

3d. Consider that our Lord ascends into Heaven in order to take His place on the throne at God's right hand; thus to enter into the possession of the kingdom His Father gives to Him, to exercise supreme dominion in Heaven and on earth. Reflect how He, as King of Heaven, will appoint their various thrones to the souls whom He brought out of Limbo and who will accompany Him into His kingdom; He will apportion to each one his fitting

place; to the patriarchs, to the prophets, to John His precursor, to His foster-father Joseph, a seat in Heaven will be assigned. Think moreover how the celestial choirs, the thrones and principalities, the virtues and powers will all come forward to pay homage to their new King, and all will prepare to hold high festival in Heaven with such rejoicings as were never before known since the world was created. And when you have fully impressed on your mind all that you have thus contemplated in imagination, reflect that it lies within your reach, it only rests with you to become yourself a denizen of that celestial kingdom, a happy subject of the heavenly King who sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE PLACE TO WHICH OUR LORD ASCENDED.

In order that you may enter more fully into the joy and triumph of the festival we celebrate to-morrow, during your meditation to-day cast your eyes upward to the place whither our Lord is about to ascend, to the Heavens above. Rise up therefore from earth, soar aloft in spirit to the realms of bliss, refresh your soul with the sight of their beauty and splendor. And that you may do this the better:

1st. Consider the beauty of earth. Picture to yourself the face of nature on a fair summer morning when the sun, rising in its majesty, gilds the summits of the mountains; when the dewdrops on every blade of grass in the meadows sparkle like so many bright pearls; when the brooklets gleam like molten silver; when the birds of the air sing so sweetly, so joyously, as if they were messengers from heaven, and over all this natural beauty the church bells ring out their deep, melodious, touching music, almost, one might fancy, as if they were an echo of the celestial hosannas. Is it possible to gaze upon this lovely sight

without being struck with amazement at the beauty of God's creation? And what you see is but a corner, a tiny portion of the great wide world with its different lands and cities, its rivers and oceans, its mighty mountains, over all of which stretches the great vault of heaven glittering with a thousand bright orbs. Now ask yourself, my soul, if the abode of sinful mortals, this curse-laden earth, is so beautiful, so grand, so wonderful, who can hope to describe the loveliness, the sublimity, the splendor, the felicity of the dwelling of God on high, the abode of the angels and saints? "My brethren," St. Augustine exclaims in one of his eloquent discourses, "let us picture to ourselves a palatial residence. However superb the property it contains, however richly it is furnished, how great soever the profusion of golden vessels to be found in it, how numerous soever the household attached to it, howsoever superbly it may be decorated with paintings, marbles, sculptures, with pillars and lofty rooms, yet in comparison with the house of God in the Heavens it is only a Babylon, wherein we are held captive." But you, my soul, are content to dwell in this prison; you like it so well that you have no wish to leave it in order to enter into that abode of the Most High which is the dwelling-place of eternal joy.

2d. Consider how St. Peter tasted upon Mount Thabor one single drop of celestial bliss, and in consequence of it forgot all the world around him. Although the apostle had not seen Heaven itself, but only our Lord in His glorified form, he was so enraptured by this sight that, inebriated with delight, he would fain have remained for ever upon Thabor. If a single drop produces such ecstatic happiness, what will be the effect of the whole ocean of celestial joys? If the mere reflection of the light of Heaven is so dazzling, what must its full brilliance, its undimmed glory be? "Run," St. Augustine says, "on the straight road that leads to the heavenly country, of which the angels are the citizens, of which God is the temple, of which the Son of God is the light, and the Holy Ghost is the all-pervading spirit of charity." Have you hitherto obeyed

this admonition? Have you run, with holy eagerness, to win the kingdom of Heaven, or have you advanced but slowly, in miserable tepidity and sloth, crawling like a snail along that path?

3d. Consider that the two apostles who were privileged actually to behold and have a foretaste of Heaven appear to search for expressions of which to make use, and to exhaust all images in the effort to describe even in a faint manner what they had seen, to give us a conception in some degree approximating to it. St. Paul is obliged to content himself with saying: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." (I. Cor. ii. 9.) And St. John evidently is at great pains to portray the image of the glorious heavenly Jerusalem which he beheld, the city adorned as a bride, the walls of which shone as jasper-stone, and her gates with the brilliance of an emerald. But let this suffice us. All that we mortals can feel, can think or speak, is, in comparison with the reality only as a drop to the ocean, as an expiring spark to the hot rays of the sun. Endeavor to comprehend this truth, my soul, and then reflect that it only rests with you to win this heavenly prize, and that you can only succeed in winning it if you lay to heart what St. Augustine says: "The price wherewith the kingdom of Heaven is to be purchased is thyself; this alone is required. It is of the same value to thee as thine own soul. Surrender thyself and thou shalt have it for thine own."

ASCENSION DAY.

ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

Imagine yourself, my soul, present on this day on the Mount of Olives; imagine yourself standing amongst the disciples of our Lord, gazing at your Saviour whilst He takes leave of His followers, gives them His final blessing, and then slowly rises up into Heaven. When you have

vividly realized this marvellous scene, proceed to meditate upon the following points:

1st. At the very same instant in which our Lord was lifted up from the earth and began slowly to soar upwards to Heaven, the souls of the just men of earlier times who were in Limbo rose up also, in order, together with their Redeemer, with their heavenly King, to make their triumphal entry into the Heaven whose portals were opened to all believers. What joy, what rapture must have filled the hearts of that saintly band, the venerable patriarchs and holy prophets, the great men and pious women of the Old Dispensation, for whom, released at length from their tedious captivity of a thousand years, the time has now come to enter with delight into the heavenly Jerusalem! And as once before, when Jesus came down from Heaven to earth, the angels ascended and descended, so they doubtless did on this happy occasion when their Lord and King returned to the Heaven He had left. Fix your attention upon the glory, the jubilation, the triumph that attended our Lord's ascension, and when you have to some extent realized it you may consider next:

2d. How fully the prediction of the Royal Prophet which the Church takes upon her lips to-day was accomplished: "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive." (Ps. lxvii. 19.) Our Lord took with Him to Heaven captives of two kinds. These were the souls of the just, who had for so long a time waited in captivity in Limbo, and there were also His beloved Mother and the apostles, who, being still held in bondage in the prison of the body, could not follow Him actually, though they could follow Him spiritually, inasmuch as they were consumed with longing to ascend at once with Him into Heaven. From the time of His departure, despising all earthly things, they only aspired to heavenly things, and yearned more and more after them, anticipating with holy impatience the day when they would see God and dwell with Him for ever in Heaven. My soul, if you are conscious of yet clinging with your affections to the things

of time and sense, pray God that on His ascension this day into Heaven, He would take your heart captive and draw it thither after Him.

3d. Consider how a bright cloud received our Lord and gradually veiled Him from His disciples' sight. There they remained standing, in hallowed silence, for the Scriptures do not mention a single word having been spoken by them; their souls too full for words, divided between the sorrow of parting, regretful desire, and eager aspiration. If you, my soul, experience similar emotions, if with Thomas à Kempis you are fain to say: "When, O good Jesus, shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom? When shall I be with Thee in Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved from all eternity?" then listen to the reply which our Lord gives you, speaking in the words of this admirable little book: "Wait a little while and thou shalt see a speedy end of evils; meanwhile labor faithfully in My vineyard; I will be thy reward. Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear manfully all that is against thee." (Imit. iii. 48-47.) Forget not this saying of our Lord: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." (St. Matt. xi. 12.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

ON THE EXCEEDING GREAT JOY WHICH OUR LORD'S ASCENSION CAUSED.

To-day recall once more to your mind and represent to yourself the awful sadness, anguish, and sorrow which once overwhelmed our oppressed Lord and His disciples on the Mount of Olives. In commencing your meditation immerse yourself once more in that ocean of bitterness, transport yourself in imagination to Mount Olivet and review the sad events of that mournful, gloomy night on which our Lord's Passion began, in order that by contrast you may be enabled to recognize more clearly and

appreciate more fully the sweetness of the joy wherewith the hearts of all overflowed who were present on the Mount of Olives on the occasion of our Lord's ascension.

1st. Consider the happiness, the joy of the just souls who went up into Heaven with our Lord. How gladly they must have quitted the prison where they had been detained for a thousand years! how their joy must have increased in degree and become exultant rapture as they drew nearer and nearer to their celestial habitation, and all its brilliance and beauty burst on their delighted sight! Theirs was the joy of the exile who after long years of weary banishment returns to his beloved country and the parental roof, endeared to him by fond reminiscences. Then the words of the Royal Prophet were truly fulfilled, words which those happy souls might well make their own: "God is ascended with jubilee and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to our King, sing ye, for He hath chosen for us His inheritance." (Ps. xlvi. 6.) Join in spirit that jubilant company of just souls, in order that you may on this day partake in some measure of the joy and consolation that was their portion.

2d. Consider the joy of the holy angels. Without doubt these celestial spirits in countless hosts accompanied their King rejoicing and exultant, magnifying with wondrous songs of praise His triumphant, victorious entry into Heaven. And when the glorious cortège approached the celestial portals, may we not fancy them shouting in the prophetic words of the Psalmist: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of glory shall enter in." And those who were within answered, they too re-echoing David's words: "Who is this King of glory who seeks to enter our gates?" And the angelic escort are heard to reply: "The Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory." (Ps. xxiii. 7, 10.) Thus the Lord entered the Heaven He had left, while the celestial choirs sang a new canticle: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and

strength and honor and glory and benediction for ever.” (Ap. v. 12.) This entry into the heavenly Jerusalem was very different, far more solemn and sublime than our Lord’s triumphal entry into the earthly Jerusalem, and His triumph was not shortlived, as it was then, but for all eternity.

3d. Consider the joy which the God-man Himself experienced on the occasion of His ascension. When He entered into the earthly Jerusalem He wept over the ill-fated city, but now on His returning to the heavenly Sion, the prophecy of David that He would ascend with jubilee and shouts of exultation was strictly fulfilled. May one not imagine the Saviour saying with holy delight to the choirs of celestial spirits: “Rejoice with Me, for I have found the sheep that was lost. Rejoice with Me because the groat that was lost is found again, the unhappy human race has been redeemed.” His was the joy of the good shepherd who has recovered the wandering sheep; the joy of the laborer in the vineyard who receives the wage for which he has worked, the joy of the faithful servant who has gained ten talents. Do you, my soul, share in this joy of your Lord? What are in general the feelings you experience in contemplating joys so transcendental, in meditating upon subjects which raise the mind far above this earth? “Dost thou perceive,” we quote the beautiful words of the *Imitation*, “a yearning after eternal bliss poured into thee from above, and that thou longest to go out from the tabernacle of the body that thou mayst behold the glory of God without any shadow of change?” or does all this leave you cold and unconcerned, do you still cleave to the pavement of earth? Ask yourself this question, and ponder this other saying of the same writer: “If I love Heaven, I willingly think on heavenly things. If I love the world, I rejoice with the prosperity of the world. If I love the flesh, I often picture to myself carnal things. If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.” (*Imit. B. iii. ch. 49, 48.*)

SATURDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

ANOTHER MEDITATION ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Again to-day, my soul, prepare to make your meditation by betaking yourself to the Mount of Olives. Pass in review our Lord's grand and glorious life on earth, which was begun at Bethlehem when by His birth He brought grace and blessings to the world, and was ended on the Mount of Olives by His triumphant ascension into Heaven. Let your eyes wander in imagination over the surrounding landscape seen from Mount Olivet, and observe particularly three objects of interest.

1st. The city of Jerusalem is visible from the Mount of Olives, and by it the heavenly country, the abode of eternal peace, is signified. For the apostle beheld the heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her nuptials; her walls were formed out of all manner of precious stones, each several gate was one resplendent pearl, and the streets of the city were of pure gold. (Ap. ch. xxi.) By this imagery the inspired Evangelist intends to convey the idea how infinitely the heavenly Jerusalem surpasses in beauty and brilliance anything that is seen on earth. You, O Christian, can behold that Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, and from the Mount of Olives you can also reach it; that is, you can reach it by the path of suffering and tribulation. This is a truth which you cannot sufficiently impress upon your memory; almost daily you need to remember it, and almost daily you fail to act in accordance with it.

2d. Consider that the Dead Sea, the symbol of the sinful world, is visible from the mountains around Jerusalem. Yes, my soul, if you desire to attain to the heavenly Jerusalem, ascend frequently upon the Mount of Olives, stand upon the hill of contemplation, since from that height you will obtain a freer, wider, more unbroken view than from the plains of everyday life. Hence survey the world and you will discern that in contrast to the heavenly life our earthly life is only a dead sea; that all its pleasures and sensual delights are in reality bitter and

nauseous, and that the beauty, the fair and attractive forms of the material body are nothing better or more durable than the city of Sodom, for a time lovely and blooming, then changing to corruption and decay. After meditating on these salutary truths you will surely exclaim in the words of the Apostle: "I count all things but dung that I may gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 8); that I may win that glory which is not the superficial gleam of the Dead Sea, but the light of an ocean of living water, the ocean of never-ending felicity.

3d. Observe that the valley of Josaphat is also visible from Mount Olivet, the place where the final judgment will be held. My soul, if you desire to enjoy the happiness of Heaven in all its fulness, see that when you stand upon the mount of meditation you often contemplate the valley of Josaphat, you often fix your thoughts upon that tribunal before which you will be required to give account of all your thoughts, words, and works. Nothing is better calculated to speed us onwards on the way to Heaven than to turn our eyes to the valley of Josaphat. "In all things," the author of the *Imitation* warns us, "look to the end, and see how thou wilt be able to stand before the strict Judge from whom nothing is hidden; who is not appeased by bribes, who admits no excuses, but will judge that which is just." (*Imit.* B. i. ch. 24.) In view of this judgment also ask yourself what use you have made of the hours that up to this time you have devoted to meditation, those daily gifts of divine grace, this salt of the sacerdotal state, of the life of the cloister. Has the life of our Lord, which has been the subject of your meditations, left blessed and salutary traces in your soul, as the Saviour on His ascension into Heaven left the mark of His footprints in the stone on the summit of Mount Olivet? If not, then bewail your carelessness, and make the resolution to do better during the season of Pentecost which is now approaching; delay not to remove this very day the obstacles that have hitherto been a hindrance to your meditations and rendered them comparatively fruitless.

FROM THE WEEK BEFORE PENTECOST TO ADVENT.

DURING THIS SEASON THE TEACHING AND MIRACLES OF OUR LORD WILL FORM THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF MEDITATION.

THE SUNDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Transport yourself in imagination to the chamber where the apostles are wont to assemble in Jerusalem, and see how the disciples, subsequently to their Lord's ascension, await the coming of the Comforter promised to them by the Saviour in devout recollection and retirement.

1st. Consider the ignorance, the instability, the timidity the apostles displayed before the advent of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord Himself previous to His departure told them: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." (St. John xvi. 12.) In what a cowardly manner they behaved during our Lord's Passion, and what timidity they displayed after their Master's death, for St. John expressly states that the doors were shut where the disciples were gathered together, "for fear of the Jews." (ch. xx. 19.) And only think, these apostles, who were as yet so ignorant and uninformed about many things, who were as yet so fearful and fainthearted, were destined to preach the Gospel to the whole world, to shed their blood and lay down their lives for their Master's cause, and go forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Supernatural assistance was indeed requisite for them, and most necessary also was it that they should prepare themselves to receive that assistance.

2d. Consider how our Lord Himself made known His desire that such preparation should be made, by expressly commanding them "that they should not depart from Jerusalem but should wait for the promise of the Father." (Acts i. 4.) Thus in accordance with our Lord's will they

were to remain in the city and wait, that is to say, prepare themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost. They were to wait, to persevere in believing, confident anticipation of the promised Comforter, that by this hopeful anticipation their faith might be increased and their longing become more intense, for as St. John Chrysostom remarks, their desire ought indeed to be great if they were to receive the great grace which the Holy Ghost would confer on them. Just as it was God the Father's will that the whole world should wait so long in expectation of the advent of His Son, and by this waiting their hope and longing for the promised Redeemer should wax ever greater and greater, so the Son of God with the same object required His disciples in like manner to await the coming of the Holy Ghost. If it was so needful for the disciples to prepare for the descent of the Holy Spirit and our Lord expressly commanded that such preparation should be made, does not this command apply to you also?

3d. Consider whether you are not in altogether the same condition as were the apostles. Think in how many matters connected with your salvation you are still so pusillanimous in adversity, so weak in temptation, so timid in the confession of your faith, so easily deterred from the conscientious observance of the rule of your Order or the duties of your sacred ministry, and this merely from motives of worldly prudence, earthly considerations, from human respect and the desire of the favor of man! Therefore you too need power from on high, and in order to merit it, remain, according to Christ's behest, in the city of Jerusalem; keep during this week in your quiet cell; stay there in holy solitude and seclusion; shut the doors of your heart out of fear, out of a just and salutary fear of the Jews, i.e., the enemies of your salvation who seek to prevent you from making due preparation for the holy festival of Pentecost. Before you rise from your meditation to-day, consider not in a general manner but in detail when, where, and how you will pass this week waiting in anticipation of the coming of the Holy Ghost; for the more perfect the preparation you make, the greater

will be the graces granted you on the festival of Pentecost.

MONDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON MORTAL SIN AS THE CHIEF HINDRANCE TO THE PROFITABLE CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST.

Every one knows the exertions people make when a distinguished guest is expected to visit them; the whole house is, so to speak, turned upside down; every part is carefully cleaned and decorated afresh, in order to provide a perfectly clean and bright apartment for the reception of the expected visitor. Now there is no greater Guest, none more illustrious than He whom you are to entertain within your heart next Sunday. Ought you not to apply yourself with the utmost solicitude to the work of cleansing your house, and before all, to remove the impurity which chiefly disfigures the temple, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost? That to which we refer is mortal sin. In order that you may form a due conception of the vast importance of thoroughly purifying your house from this defilement, let it be the subject of your meditation to-day.

1st. Consider the words of the Wise Man in the Old Testament: "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins." (Wisd. i. 4.) According to St. Thomas, by wisdom is here meant the gift of the Holy Spirit and also the Giver, the Holy Spirit Himself. Thus we are told that the Holy Ghost never enters into a soul that is malicious, whose will is evil and perverse, corrupted by mortal sin. Mortal sin is like a heavy sepulchral stone laid upon the tomb of the soul, which bars the entrance to the reanimating, life-giving Spirit; it is the crust of ice which forms over the unhappy soul, and prevents the warm sunshine of the Holy Ghost from penetrating and melting it. However much you pray, however much you fast, even if you chastise yourself to blood, all is in vain. You must first remove that stone, you must first melt that coating of ice in the fire of penance, in the warm breeze of contrition, other-

wise the coming of the Holy Spirit will be profitless as far as you are concerned.

2d. Consider how the patriarch Noe once sent forth a dove out of the ark, but she soon returned to him, not finding where her foot might rest. Before the dove, Noe had sent out a raven; that however had not returned to him, as being an unclean bird it could easily settle upon a dead body. But the dove in her purity disdained so foul a resting-place and preferred to fly back to Noe into the ark. Here, my soul, you have a beautiful emblem of the Holy Ghost. He, the third Person of the Godhead, the celestial Dove, will not rest upon carrion. He will not, that is, come to dwell within a soul of one who is in a state of spiritual decomposition through mortal sin, for such a one is to Him an abomination, He holds him in abhorrence. Ponder this carefully. Alas! it may be that the heavenly Dove hovers anxiously about you; already you hear His wings fluttering near you, you feel that grace is at hand. O rise up forthwith! Cleanse yourself at once from mortal sin, that the Holy Spirit may meet with no impediment when He comes to take up His abode within your heart.

3d. In order more fully to appreciate and estimate aright the abhorrence with which the soul of one who is in a state of mortal sin inspires the Holy Ghost, consider how the sight of the remains of the Empress Isabella, whose face and figure, in life so attractive and lovely, were by death rendered in so short a space of time repulsive and hideous to the last degree, filled St. Francis Borgia with such disgust and loathing for the world that he abandoned it immediately. If that was the effect produced upon the saint, what must be the disgust and abhorrence wherewith the Holy Ghost regards the soul that is dead, decomposed by mortal sin? If one single mortal sin changed the most beauteous and brilliant of the angels into a hideous devil, how repugnant to the Holy Ghost must be the sight of a soul stained with mortal sin. No wonder that He will not take up His dwelling in a temple thus defiled. Purify yourself therefore, my soul,

and if you have already undergone this cleansing process, and need it not yourself, then be instant in prayer; send up your petitions to Heaven on behalf of the souls under your care; exhort, preach, labor in the sacred ministry; undertake voluntary mortifications in order that a goodly number of your fellow Christians may at the approaching Whitsuntide cleanse their souls from that whereby the Holy Spirit is most forcibly withheld, mortal sin.

TUESDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON PRIDE AS A HINDRANCE TO THE PROFITABLE CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST.

The Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, was with the apostles at the time when they were preparing in silence and seclusion for the coming of the Holy Ghost. From her, the lowly handmaid of the Lord, who precisely on account of her humility was chosen to be the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, we may learn that if the coming of the Holy Spirit is to be fruitful in graces for us, it appertains above all to our preparation for that coming to banish all kind of pride from the heart, for pride resists the Holy Spirit.

1st. Consider how the Holy Spirit descended with His grace upon Saul, an unassuming husbandman, when Samuel the prophet anointed him king of Israel. But as soon as Saul had grown arrogant, and was envious of David because of his reputation, and even in his pride of heart wilfully disobeyed the commandment of God, the Holy Spirit departed from him, and an evil spirit, a spirit of melancholy, took possession of him. Unhappily there are many who follow in Saul's footsteps. How many men have kept themselves free from the servitude of vice, how many have perhaps for years led a life of the strictest penance, have practised austerities and mortifications, and suddenly, when they seemed to have attained the summit of perfection, they have fallen, and fallen so deeply!

What was the cause of this? Conquered by pride, they lost the Holy Spirit and His sanctifying grace, and all the exertions and efforts of a whole life went for nothing. Thus let it be remembered that the Holy Spirit departs from the proud.

2d. Consider further that He does not come to the haughty. Only think how full of people Jerusalem was at the time of Pentecost, and yet the Holy Spirit who descended to earth as a rushing, mighty wind came but to a few men, came only to the poor, insignificant, humble apostles, not to the high priests, not to the proud Pharisees, not to the haughty Scribes. St. James teaches us that the Holy Spirit only distils the dew of His grace upon the hearts of the humble. (Ch. iv. 6.) It is in valleys and low-lying meadows that we see the fertilizing waters flow down and congregate. St. Augustine says that humility attracts God to the soul, while pride does the contrary. God is great, he adds, God is on high; if thou abase thyself He will condescend to come down to thee, but if thou liftest up thyself, He will fly from thee. "The humble soul," St. Bonaventure remarks, "is open to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit; it is as susceptible of His gracious influences as melted wax is of the impression stamped upon it." When Joseph made a banquet for his brethren, the best portions were sent to Benjamin, the youngest and the least among them. Ask yourself whether you most resemble the humble Benjamin or the haughty Saul?

3d. Consider how easily pride creeps into the human heart. Almost all men are more or less infected with this sin. The sin of pride even made its entrance into Heaven: it thrust itself up to the steps of the throne of the Most High, it brought about the fall of the highest of the celestial spirits. "The other vices," St. Augustine says, "only accompany sinful actions, but we have to be on our guard against pride even in the performance of good actions." How many have risen as on eagles' wings and attained a lofty height of virtue and suddenly through pride fallen down and become blind bats! We read

of a hermit who walked unhurt over red-hot embers, and a thought of pride having on that account insinuated itself into his heart, he fell from the paths of virtue wherein he had attained great eminence and became the prey of the lowest vices. Be warned by these lessons, and this very day scrutinize the inmost recesses of your heart; observe when and in what manner you most frequently yield to this most dangerous sin; form a rule for yourself that you may know how you can best combat it every day, and especially implore the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost to create in you a humble heart.

WEDNESDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEYING THE INSPIRATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Place before your mind some saint of your Order or of your state in life, one in whom the operation of the grace of the Holy Spirit was plainly visible, one who was distinguished by the most eminent virtues which are the effect of grace and the fruits of the Holy Ghost. Now if the contemplation of this saint fills you with longing to become yourself such a vessel of the Holy Ghost, such an instance of the results of His gracious operation in the soul, then lay to heart this saying of an eminent master of the spiritual life: "The greatest hindrance in the way of our progress and of the reception of spiritual graces consists in this, that we do not carry out the holy desires God instils into our hearts." Non-obedience to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit is another hindrance to our obtaining the graces of the Pentecostal feast.

1st. "No man can come to Me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him" (St. John vi. 44) the divine Redeemer asserts. This drawing on the part of God is a gentle impulse; it is an invitation, a whispered call; in a word it is the daily suggestions of His grace. If we do not obey these divine inspirations, if we do not correspond

with them and make use of these graces, bestowed on us by God, He will be slow to confer others on us. "He," says Father Avila, "who makes a bad use of the light given him by God has no right to expect other graces, for God might with all justice say to him: How canst thou want to know any further what My will is, since thou dost not accomplish it in matters wherein thou dost know it? If thou dost not carry out the holy desires with which God now inspires thee, with what semblance of a claim canst thou ask similar graces of Him at a subsequent period, to suit thine own pleasure and convenience?" St. Stephen, addressing the Jews, exclaimed: "O you stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you did always resist the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii. 51.) His hearers were attracted by the words of truth which he spoke, the utterances of the Holy Spirit coming from his lips; but they did not heed them at the time, and later on they had not the chance of hearing them. Wherefore if you desire to come to God, if more particularly you desire to approach the fountain of all grace, the Holy Spirit of God, oh let yourself be drawn by Him, obey His holy suggestions day by day, and take as your own the words of the prophet Samuel: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (I. Kings iii. 10.)

2d. Consider what is to be understood by the attraction or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Fathers of the Church and Holy Scripture employ different expressions to designate this operation of the power of the Holy Ghost, such as knocking, inspiring, enlightening, calling, speaking to the soul, visiting it, comforting it. How often the Spirit of the Lord speaks within us! The Holy Ghost, St. Antony declares, speaks within us whenever we have a thought that is good. How often He sweetly stimulates and incites us to act, how often He helps us with "unspeakable groanings." Consequently every really good thought, every good resolution, every pious desire of the soul is an impulse from the Holy Ghost. Listen to the words of the author of the Imitation: "Blessed is that soul which hears the Lord speaking within her. Blessed

are the ears which receive the instilling of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of the world." (B. iii. ch. 1.) Unhappily for us, we do not hear them, and still more often do not heed them. "Even until now," says our Lord in the words of the Imitation, "I cease not to speak to all, but many are deaf to My voice, and hard. Most men give ear more gladly to the world than to God." Do you, my soul, belong to the many of whom our Lord here speaks?

3d. Consider how carefully one must distinguish between what is and what is not divine inspiration. "For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, even though it seem to a man right and good. It is hard to judge truly whether it be a good or an evil spirit which urges thee on to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved by thine own spirit." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 15.) Wherefore whenever you feel uncertain in this respect, let this be your petition: "Lord, Thou knowest in what way it is best; let this or that be done as Thou wilt. If Thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, take away from me such a desire." But if after mature deliberation on your own part, or consultation with your spiritual director it is clearly apparent that God is speaking within you, oh obey His inspirations; do not heed what is agreeable or disagreeable to the flesh, but strive that it may against its will be brought into subjection to the Spirit. Consider how much may depend upon one such call from God, if we yield obedience to it. His voice it was that led St. Antony to adopt his wondrous career, that instigated St. Francis to found his Order, that brought St. Mary of Egypt to her supernatural life of penance. How much greater would have been your advancement in perfection, how much more often would the festival of Pentecost have been a day of rich graces for you, had you only paid more attention to the daily inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

THURSDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON SIMPLICITY AND SINCERITY OF HEART AS THE CHIEF
REQUISITE FOR THE PROFITABLE CELEBRATION OF
PENTECOST.

Recall to mind, my soul, the pleasing scene described in the Gospel, when our Lord placed a little child in the midst of the disciples, and proposed that little one, whose charm lay in the simplicity and sincerity of his heart, as a model for the imitation of His apostles. And as it pleased our Lord, so nothing pleases the Holy Spirit more than childlike simplicity and candor; hence it would be another and a serious obstacle to the reception of the graces of Pentecost, were you to celebrate that feast with a deceitful, dissimulating heart, a secretive, reticent spirit.

1st. Consider that Holy Scripture tells us that "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xii. 22.) And Sirach the Wise Man declares: "A lie is a foul blot in a man." "A thief is better than a man that is always lying, but both of them shall inherit destruction." (Ecclus. xx. 26, 27.) From these passages of Holy Scripture you see, my soul, how repugnant to the Holy Spirit—for He it is who speaks by the mouth of the wise men of the Old Testament—is lying and all that is included in it; double-dealing, cunning, dissimulation, for that is acting a lie continually; you see how intensely He hates everything that is opposed to simplicity and uprightness of heart. A soul in which these two virtues are lacking resembles a broken mirror from which the grace and the light of the Holy Spirit can only be reflected in a distorted manner. The Apostle tells us that the Church, the bride of the Holy Spirit, must be stainless, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27); accordingly, it follows that you, who are a spiritual church, a mystic temple of the Holy Ghost, must likewise be without stain, that your soul must be free from spots and wrinkles, that all about

her must be smooth and even like the polished surface of a mirror, for then the sunbeams of grace, the light of the Holy Spirit, will be most perfectly and beautifully reflected in it.

2d. Consider that in the world the evils most opposed to simplicity and uprightness, i.e., duplicity and concealment, are so common, that the words of the prophet Osee may be fitly reechoed in the present day: "There is no truth in the land." (Osee iv. 1.) Everywhere lying, falsehood, deceit and guile have got the upper hand; the words of the lips are at variance with the feelings of the heart, and he who in speech and behavior appears your friend is in reality your enemy. On account of all this St. John declares that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit. How necessary, how all-important it is for you, who as a Priest, as a Religious have forsaken the world, to guard yourself carefully against this vice which is so prevalent in the world, otherwise in spite of your renunciation of the world you would not be in a state to receive the Holy Spirit. Nay more, you would be doubly incapable of receiving Him, since you would be an arrant hypocrite, hiding a worldly heart, a heart, that is, full of craftiness and cunning, beneath a habit which proclaims you a stranger to the ways of the world. Examine yourself therefore; ascertain whether you possess the virtue of simplicity which gives itself out for what it is, whether you have the sincere heart of a Nathanael, without guile or artifice, for upon this it depends whether you receive in greater or less measure the graces of the approaching feast, when the celestial Dove, descending from above, loves to alight in hearts that are innocent, guileless, dovelike.

3d. Consider of what vast importance it is for ordinary Christians, and pre-eminently for members of a Religious Order, to cherish mutual candor and uprightness of soul, and how much mischief on the other hand is caused by underhand dealing, a want of candor and outspokenness. Frank, guileless, candid natures are like children easily contented and they are beloved by all. Brethren who are of a suspicious, sly, secretive disposition cannot live at

peace with themselves or with others. St. Dorotheus says: "Some persons are in the habit of assigning one reason or another for the falling away of every Religious who is not faithful to his vocation. This one, they say, was obliged to leave the monastery on account of the delicacy of his health, and so on; but I say the real cause was that when the temptation first assailed him he kept it to himself and did not manifest his inmost heart to any one." Learn hence to walk before God in simplicity and sincerity of heart, to be open with His representative, your Superior or the director of your conscience; towards your Brethren or Sisters be also frank and straightforward, without however at the same time forgetting the counsel given you in that inestimable little book: "Discover not thy heart to every man. Have charity towards all, but familiarity is not expedient." (Imit. B. i. ch. 8.)

FRIDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH CONCERNING THE HOLY GHOST.

To-day, my soul, rise up on the wings of meditation to the celestial courts, and there place yourself in the presence of the great, the infinite, the Most Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Pass rapidly in review the works whereby God the Father has revealed His unseen existence to man, making Himself known in the work of creation, as God the Son does in the work of redemption. Now the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, emerges from the bosom of the mysterious life of Heaven hidden from human ken.

1st. As the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son from all eternity, so now in time He is sent by the Father and the Son. He is not on this account less than the other two divine Persons, inferior to those who send Him, for, bear it well in mind, faith teaches us that all the three Persons are one in essence, one in omnipotence, equal in wisdom, etc. Do we not repeat in the Creed: I believe

in the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified? Yes, muse awhile on the sublimity, the divinity of the Comforter who is to come, who is worthy to be adored and worshipped, in order to stimulate yourself to celebrate the feast of Pentecost with greater devotion and more profound reverence.

2d. Consider furthermore what the Church teaches us regarding the Holy Ghost, and meditate upon it. The Father decrees, the Son executes, the Holy Ghost consummates. God the Father decreed from all eternity the creation and redemption of man, the Son, as the Word of the Father performed the work of creation, and in this character of God made man wrought the redemption of mankind, while the Holy Spirit, "moving over the face of the waters," finished the creation of the world, and completed the work of redemption by abiding in the Church until the consummation of ages. Moreover we pray to God the Father through the Son and by virtue of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost does not proceed from the Father as does the second Person of the Holy Trinity, He is not begotten and consequently is not, like Him, designated as a Son, but He proceeds from the Father in another, an unknown, mysterious manner. The mission of the divine Persons in time corresponds to the procession of those divine Persons in eternity. God the Father is made of none, therefore He cannot be sent. The Son is from the Father alone, therefore He was sent by the Father. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, proceeding from both, therefore He is sent by both. Drink in this profound, mysterious, marvellous doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost, and look forward with joyful anticipation to the day when you will be enabled to see clearly that of which you have now only a foreshadowing and dim apprehension.

3d. Consider finally that the mission of the Holy Ghost is a twofold mission, visible and invisible. He appeared visibly on the day of Pentecost in the shape of tongues as it were of fire, and at the river Jordan in the form of a white dove. He is sent invisibly every day, every hour to

the souls of men. It is the Holy Ghost who descends invisibly to the heart whenever a sinner is converted, when a just man is interiorly enlightened, when one who has been converted suddenly feels himself mightily urged to strive after perfection, when a youth or a maiden experiences an almost irresistible attraction to the sacerdotal or Religious state, when a Christian is inspired to undertake and given strength to perform some great, extraordinary act of penance or work of charity. How often has this happened to ourselves? how have we made use of such Pentecostal days? My soul, bewail your sins of negligence towards the Holy Ghost, and pray that the approaching Pentecost may be fruitful in such invisible visitations.

SATURDAY BEFORE PENTECOST.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THE APOSTLES.

Imagine yourself, my soul, seated among the disciples in the upper room of the house where the descent of the Holy Ghost is about to take place. Endeavor in some measure to realize the state and dispositions of that devout assembly waiting with expectant hearts for the things that were to come.

1st. The longer the advent of the Comforter was delayed, the more ardent the longing of the apostles became. Now the day of Pentecost had come, the fiftieth day after our Lord's resurrection. Concerning this day St. Chrysostom writes thus: "Pentecost is a day of remission, of reconciliation, of release." We read in the book of Leviticus that the Jews considered the number fifty to be a sacred number, and they made the fiftieth year a year of jubilee, in which according to the law of God all debts were cancelled and all lands and inheritances that had been alienated were restored to their former possessors or to their heirs. Now our inheritance is the land of the living, the eternal possessions for the enjoyment of which we were created. Through Adam's prevarication this inheritance was

lost; we have forfeited our right to those possessions through our transgressions, but now the fiftieth day has come, a year of jubilee for us all; we are reinstated in our inheritance, and the newly founded Church, confirmed and endowed with graces by the Holy Spirit, receives back the eternal goods to dispense them to her children. Rejoice therefore, my soul, be glad of the coming of this day, and remember that it depends solely on yourself whether or no all the debt you owe to God shall be cancelled on the morrow.

2d. Consider that the Holy Ghost is said to come down with the sound of the wind. This is to denote the power of the Holy Ghost, whose action is beneficial as that of the wind frequently is. The wind purifies the air and dispels miasma, so the Holy Ghost cleanses the soul and banishes hurtful influences from it. The wind promotes rain and disperses fog, so the Holy Ghost moistens the soul with grace descending like rain and banishes the mists of pusillanimity and doubt which rest upon and obscure it. The wind cools excessive heat and tempers the air, so the Holy Ghost reduces the fire of concupiscence and refreshes the soul, imparting greater repose and equanimity to it. The wind propels ships on their course and works mills, so the Holy Ghost urges the soul forward on the way of holiness and will not allow her to stand still in the work of her own sanctification and the salvation of others. Finally the wind blows the faint spark to a clear flame, and scatters the chaff far and wide. God grant that the Holy Spirit may find in your breast to-morrow a spark of divine charity, which He may kindle to a bright and glowing fire, not mere empty chaff which the wind carries away.

3d. Consider the mystic meaning of this rushing sound which accompanied the descent of the Holy Ghost. The expression made use of in Scripture is the sound not of the approach of an actual storm, but *as it were* of a mighty wind. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming." (Acts ii. 2.) As in the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters

with His vivifying breath, He now manifests Himself as the fashioner and life-giver of the new creation. This sound may also be regarded as an echo of the terrific thunder which on a day of Pentecost long past pealed from the height of Sinai. As Jehova then completed the giving of the law to Israel amid thunder and lightning, so the Holy Ghost, as a whirlwind which nothing can withstand, comes down from Heaven to establish the law of the New Covenant.

According to the explanation given by St. Cyril, all that survived of the Old Dispensation tottered and fell beneath the shock of the mighty spiritual impetus descending from Heaven. But all the latent negative force present in the new creation will be roused to its depths and called into action; it will be purified by the might from above and will receive power to take Heaven by storm. Beware, my soul, lest the force of the Holy Spirit, coming down to-morrow from Heaven as it were a mighty wind, should break you off as a dead, a useless, a rotten branch from the tree of the Church. May it rather on the contrary awaken in you the dormant force for higher, spiritual things; that is, may it kindle more hotly in you the aspiration after perfection and give you power to use that violence by which we are told the kingdom of heaven is borne away.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT UNDER THE FORM OF FIERY TONGUES.

Represent to yourself, my soul, the grand, the wondrous scene when the Holy Ghost descended from above; imagine that you see the apostles and disciples of the Lord, to whom, they being all together in one place, there suddenly appeared "parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them." (Acts ii. 3.) It is said "as it were of fire" to signify that what appeared was not

actual fire, but a supernatural, spiritual fire, which, taking the semblance of separate tongues of flame, descended and rested upon the head of each individual who was present. The fact that the mission of the Holy Ghost took place under this particular form is replete with mystic meaning.

1st. Consider that in the Old Testament fire is a symbol of the Deity in His external manifestation; of His sanctity and immateriality; of His outward action in purifying and enlightening, as well as in testing and consuming. It was one and the self-same divine fire that appeared in the bush as a flame and did not burn it; that was laid upon the lips of the prophet Isaias and cleansed them, and which, typified by the sacrificial fire under the Old Dispensation, was perpetually kept alive upon the altar of burnt offering. This spiritual fire parted itself into flames assuming the form of tongues to signify that it came from the Eternal Word, and its mission was to endow the apostles with power to preach the Word, to publish His doctrine to the whole world in purity of speech calculated to inflame charity, to kindle the heart. Oh how mysterious, how profound in meaning are these symbols of God and of His Church, yet the world in its ignorance and depravity does but mock at and despise them!

2d. Consider what St. Luke records our Lord to have said: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (St. Luke xii. 49.) The Holy Spirit thus sent down from above in the form of fire is the embodiment of charity of which we read that it is stronger than death. This charity is an all-consuming, all-conquering, all-devouring fire. St. Bonaventure thus speaks of it: "The Holy Spirit is a fire that inflames the affections, enlightens the understanding, kindles the will." Again, St. Antony of Padua says: "The heart which is enkindled by the Holy Ghost cannot possibly be burnt by the fire of adversity or scorched by the flame of the temptations of the evil one, for the celestial fire of the Holy Ghost counteracts the flame of malign concupis-

cence." Ponder, my soul, on the words of these two great teachers of the seraphic Order; and if our Lord on this day casts fire on the earth, and wills that it be kindled, oh why is not your heart inflamed by it? Ask yourself this question, ask it seriously, that Pentecost may not fail to be a season of grace for you.

3d. Consider the Apostle's words: "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebr. xii. 29.) Fire consumes all corrupt matter; it consumes what is impure in anything, what is hurtful; it refines gold and separates it from the dross. St. Antony says: "Just as fire burns, purifies, warms, illuminates, so the Holy Ghost burns up, destroys sin in the soul, cleanses the heart, banishes sloth, enlightens the ignorant mind." Reflect upon this truth. For alas! how numerous are our sins and transgressions! Our hearts are sullied by corrupt propensities and thus they are unfitted for sweet union and communion with God. Who will cleanse us? The consuming fire of the Holy Ghost. As it once descended upon the sinful world, burning, purifying, enlightening, so it acts upon each individual soul on which it falls and which it kindles. Wherefore open wide your heart, to admit that devouring element, that mystic, spiritual fire, in order that by it you may be cleansed and refined; and repeat more fervently than ever the prayer: Come Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love.

MONDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Contemplate, my soul, the condition of the world as described by Moses when he said: "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." (Gen. i. 2.) Endeavor to realize how dark and dismal that solitude was, and then behold how suddenly at the word of the Lord there was light. What a marvellous change was instantaneously wrought, how much more beautiful and attractive the world became. A

similar darkness in the spiritual order brooded over the earth until all at once the light shone forth in the darkness, this change being effected by the Holy Spirit.

1st. Consider that light came into the world through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The light which shone in the spiritual darkness of the world was none other than our Lord when He became man. Of Him St. John writes: "That was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (St. John i. 9.) And our Lord Himself says: "I am come a light into the world." (St. John xii. 46.) Now consider that it was the Holy Ghost who kindled that light, since it was by virtue of His operation that the only-begotten Son of the Father took flesh, for it was by His miraculous overshadowing power that the incarnation of our Lord in the womb of the most pure and holy Virgin was made possible. Moreover when the time came for Christ to enter upon His public ministry, the Holy Spirit set that Light, so to speak, upon a candlestick, proving to all the world the divine character of the Redeemer, by descending upon His head in the waters of Jordan; and again He it was who melted the hearts of the apostles and disciples, that they might receive that celestial light, and not thrust it from them as the other Jews did in their obduracy. The co-operation of the Holy Ghost plays a far greater part in general in the work of the Son of God than we commonly think that it does, and the co-operation of the third Person of the Holy Trinity in the salvation of your individual soul is more necessary and important than you have perhaps hitherto considered it to be.

2d. Consider that it is through the action of the Holy Ghost that we are first fully enlightened by the celestial Light. Although our Lord had by His word and His example shown the way of salvation to His disciples, yet they comprehended it so little that we observe them only to be fully enlightened in regard to it, only really acting in conformity to the will of their Master after Christ had spoken the words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (St. John xx. 22), and the Holy Spirit had descended upon

them. Now what the Holy Spirit did for the apostles that He also does for us. We owe it to His illumination that the teaching of our Lord shines in the darkness of our soul; to His grace it is to be ascribed that we follow the commandments of our Lord and "walk in light," and to His vivifying presence it is due that the work of redemption accomplished by Christ maintains its life and potency upon earth. Just as Jesus, the true Light that came down from Heaven, only appeared on earth by means of the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, so without the gracious influence of that same Spirit, that Light does not shine in the soul of the individual man. For where His divine assistance is wanting these words will prove true: "The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (St. John i. 5.)

Ask yourself, my soul, after what you have been considering, why you have to so great an extent failed to comprehend the wondrous doctrine taught by our Lord, and why you have not ordered your life more in conformity with that teaching? Is it perhaps because you have lacked the assistance of the Holy Spirit? Oh see then that you frequently call upon Him for assistance, especially in all your works, in all your undertakings, and then there will be about them something more of the character of Christ.

3d. Consider what the world would be without light. It would be utterly unattractive; it would be impossible for us to distinguish one thing from another or to recognize any person, to see anything beautiful or pleasing to the sight; all would be hidden, wrapped in obscurity. Now what the great, wide world would be in the absence of light, such is the little world of the human soul without the Holy Spirit. Without that light darkness reigns in the heart. What was wanting to the Jews, what did they need to enable them to comprehend the light which shone so clearly, so brightly in the teaching of our Lord? The light of the Holy Spirit was wanting to them, and for this they were themselves to blame, because they "always resisted the Holy Ghost." (Acts vii. 51.) Is that

perhaps the case with you? Alas, of what avail is it that the sun shines in the heavens in all its splendor, if you close windows and shutters so that its genial rays cannot find access into your dwelling? Thus many shut the door of their heart against the light, denying entrance to the light of grace shed abroad by the divine Spirit; walking in darkness and doing the works of darkness, they are not in a state of sanctifying grace, and consequently it profits them nothing that Jesus, the Light of the world, hath appeared to men. Wherefore invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit more often than heretofore, and join heartily in the Church's supplication: *Veni lumen cordium*, come, divine Light, visit and enlighten my heart.

TUESDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AS A FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER.

Picture to yourself, my soul, the clear, fresh spring which gushed out of the rock when Moses struck it with his rod. What a welcome sight it must have been for the weary, thirsting Israelites! How they must have shouted for joy and raised their hearts in love and thankfulness to the Lord, who had provided them in the midst of the desert with cool, refreshing water in so marvellous a manner! With what awe they must have regarded that sacred stream bestowed on them by the hand of God! Now in like manner the Holy Ghost is to the faithful a wondrous spring, a fount of living water.

1st. Consider this: According to St. Ambrose the river of living water, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God, spoken of in the Apocalypse, represents the Holy Ghost, who with His manifold gifts and graces continually flows down upon us like a beauteous, bounteous stream. And as along the course of such a river the vegetation is most luxuriant, its banks are verdant and flowery, all things grow and thrive, so it is with the souls who are planted beside that river of living

water, of which our Lord said to the women of Samaria that it springs up into life eternal; they are verdant, flourishing fruit-trees in the garden of the Lord. Then why, my soul, are you so withered and dried up, devoid of sap and of vitality? Do not question about this long, but without further delay join in the supplication of the woman at Jacob's well: "Sir, give me this water"; pray that you may be given to drink of the fountain of grace, the Holy Spirit of God.

2d. Consider that our Lord Himself compares the Holy Ghost to a fount of water, rich in every blessing. For when we read that, standing in the temple of Jerusalem, Christ cried to the people: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," we find that the Evangelist adds in his own words: "Now this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believed on Him." (St. John vii. 37-39.) How vivid a picture we can set before our minds from the image our Lord employs of the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit! We know how the streams run down from the mountains, how the rains come down from the heavens, to fertilize and refresh the parched ground with their waters. In the same way the graces of the Holy Spirit are poured down like a plentiful shower of rain upon thirsty souls who yearn after salvation. But mark what our Lord says: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." Alas! after all it may be that you do not feel this thirst; that, immersed in earthly interests, you do not even experience any desire for the gifts of the Holy Ghost; that you do not so much as draw near to Him who can bestow them, but hold aloof from devout supplication and from the reception of the sacraments. Or perhaps you do indeed come, but you do not drink. That is, you do not make use of the opportunities, of the graces within your reach.

3d. Consider how the Lord speaks reproachfully of His people in the book of the prophet Jeremias (ii. 13): "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water,

and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Thus men despise the cool, sweet streams of grace, preferring to drink from cisterns, from broken reservoirs of troubled waters. These troubled waters are, according to St. Thomas of Villanova, the sensual desires and carnal lusts of our fallen nature, which fill the soul to such an extent that there is no space left in that unhappy soul, sunk in the mire of sin, for the pure, living water of the Holy Spirit, for the streams of grace that flow from Him. Is that the case with you? Ask yourself this question and then make resolutions suited to your needs.

WEDNESDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AS A COMFORTER.

Picture to yourself a man who is profoundly sorrowful, utterly dejected and despondent. Nothing gives him any pleasure, nothing has power to cheer him. The world, which to others appears full of happiness and joy, is for him dreary and desolate. How greatly such a hapless individual stands in need of consolation and encouragement! Think what an inestimable benefit any one would confer on him, who went to him with solace and succor, who raised his spirits and inspired him with fresh energy and courage for the battle of life. The Holy Ghost comes to us as such a Comforter, to impart spiritual consolation to the downcast.

1st. Consider how the Holy Spirit showed Himself to be a Comforter in the case of the apostles. Compare their state of mind, their condition before and after the day of Pentecost. Then trace the operation of the Holy Ghost as a Comforter in the course of the Church's history. Think how He ever was her strength and solace, as the Spirit of fortitude in seasons of persecution, as the Spirit of truth when heresies arose, as the Giver of life in times of unbelief and apostacy. Consider, further, how abun-

dantly His consolations are poured out upon the sinner in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and upon the just in the other sacraments of His grace. Give thanks to this divine Comforter, call upon Him of whom the Church in her inspired language sings: *Consolator optime, dulcis hostes animæ, dulce refrigerium.*

Thou of comforters the best,
Thou the soul's most welcome guest,
Sweet refreshment give and rest.

2d. Consider that true consolation is only to be found in the Holy Ghost. The world also affords consolation of a certain kind by her possessions, her joys, her pleasures. But that is no true solace; it is all too transitory, it often has a bitter flavor at the time, and generally the after-taste following upon even brief enjoyment is sour and acrid to the spiritual palate. Hear what the great ascetic says on this subject: "All human solace is vain and short-lived. Blessed and true is that solace which is inwardly received from the truth." This was the experience of all those saints who are counted as penitents. Ask St. Augustine, who for a long period tasted the sweets of earthly solace, ask the saints of your own Order, ask the saints who withdrew from the world and lived in the solitude of the desert, ask these, I say, where they found true consolation, and they will answer in the words of the Imitation: "True comfort is to be sought in God alone. For if I alone should have all the comforts of this world and could enjoy all its delights, it is certain they could not last long. Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted nor have perfect refreshment save in God, the Comforter of the poor and the Upraiser of the humble." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 16.)

Meditate upon this, my soul, and if you stand in need of consolation seek it only from the true Comforter, the Holy Ghost.

3d. Consider in what true consolation consists. Not in sensible devotion, sweet and pleasant to the sensible faculties of the soul. Such solace is at the best evanescent, and oftentimes delusive; not unfrequently it is due more to the

natural state of mind than to the Holy Ghost. Hence it is seen that those who at the time of prayer, of meditation, of divine worship, enjoy the consolation of sensible devotion and sweet whispers to the soul, are apt to fall when temptation assails them, whereas those who are strangers to such solace and spiritual delights come out conquerors in the spiritual combat. The sensible consolations of which we speak are sweet things, given by God to beginners in the spiritual life for their encouragement, and when they come from God they are by no means to be despised. But true solace, true and perfect peace consists in this, that we surrender ourselves to the divine will with our whole heart; that with unchanged attitude of soul we persevere in giving thanks whether in happiness or in affliction, and accept all from the hand of God with the same filial affection whether His hand bestows favors, or is laid heavily upon us for our correction. But this consolation can only be obtained and attained by the renunciation of all earthly, all human solace and all sensible delights. Is not this what you as a Priest, a Religious, ought to desire? Oh turn this very day to the true source of all consolation, beseech Him to come and visit your soul with His divine solace. Say to Him: "Let all temporal solace be far from me, let Thy grace alone be poured plentifully into my soul."

THURSDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AS THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

Fire is rightly considered to be an apt emblem of charity, for charity is also a pure flame emitting light and heat, self-consuming for the benefit or for the glory of others. This is another reason why the Holy Ghost appeared on the day of Pentecost under the form of fire, as He is essentially the Spirit of charity.

1st. Consider that St. John tells us that "God is charity." (i. 4, 16.) Although this applies to all the three

Persons of the most Holy Trinity, yet this sublime attribute of "charity" is appropriated more especially to the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. For as the Son was begotten of the Father in the character of the Eternal Word, the highest, most perfect, absolute Wisdom, so the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son as supreme, absolute charity, and constitutes the sweet bond of love between the Father and the Son. And therefore also the charity of God is, as the Apostle declared, and as the Church teaches, "poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." (Rom. v. 5.) Where the Holy Spirit is present there the flame of divine charity burns brightly and hotly. This is apparent in the apostles; this is apparent in those to whom the apostles in their turn communicated the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands; this is apparent in the saints of God, the men and women who are filled with the Holy Ghost; this you are conscious of in your own soul, for the charity of God only abides in you as long as you remain in a state of grace, the sanctifying grace imparted to you by the Holy Spirit. And according as this grace is increased or diminished, so the love of God waxes or wanes in our hearts.

2d. Consider how the Holy Ghost is a source whence charity, peace and concord flow. Hence it was that St. Luke was able to write in reference to the early Christians, the first community of the faithful who were endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that they "had but one heart and one soul." (Acts iv. 32.) None among them, he tells us, said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but in the Spirit of charity they had all things in common. As the children of God they formed one household, one family. Pause, my soul, and contemplate this fair picture which the Church presented in her first bridal days; imagine that you see that community united in the bonds of mutual charity, united together by the Spirit of charity, who still continues to produce that union in ecclesiastical associations and monastic communities where He and He alone holds sway.

3d. Consider the state of things that prevails when this Spirit of charity is wanting. Look at the disunion, the divisions among Christians on earth, from which not even those are exempt whom Nature has united in the closest ties of relationship. See how the world is split into factions, each seeking its own selfish interests, see how men live in strife and contention, as if the earth were inhabited by ravenous beasts rather than by brethren and sisters, members of one great family. Look further and you will see that even among Priests who have received the Holy Spirit in a special degree, that even in religious Communities, whose members have been called by the Holy Spirit to lead the life of the early Christians and have received graces similar to theirs, this Spirit of charity is to a great extent wanting, and in its place a very different spirit reigns, a spirit of jealousy, of envy, of malice, of discord. Nay, you need but to look into your own heart, where there is so much that is in direct variance with charity; observe how often in the course of a single day uncharitable thoughts intrude themselves into your mind, how often your eye looks with ill-will on others, how often your tongue utters words which will give pain, then ask yourself when this state of things began to prevail and you will find that it was when the grace of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying grace, began to lose ground in your soul. Wherefore pray to-day from the bottom of your heart for yourself, for your brethren and sisters, for the world in general; saying: Come Holy Ghost, visit our hearts and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. For our Lord tells us that on love towards God and towards our neighbor, "the whole law and the prophets dependeth." Now He who alone can impart to us this twofold charity —mark these words—is the Holy Ghost.

FRIDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AS THE FATHER OF THE POOR.

In order that your heart may be duly filled with love and gratitude towards the Holy Ghost, you have in the preceding meditations contemplated several of His glorious characteristics. You have seen Him to be the Light of the world, the Author of your salvation, the Spirit of charity; now you are invited to fix your thoughts in devout meditation on another most attractive attribute of that same Spirit, which the Church recalls to our mind when she invokes Him as the "Father of the poor." *Veni, pater pauperum.* This name is rightly given to the third Person of the Holy Trinity, as we shall proceed to show.

1st. The Holy Ghost is the Father of all men, and all men may well be called poor. Are we not all poor banished children of Eve, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears, and moreover unhappy sinners, who in addition to all other tribulations have the dread of hell before our eyes? We poor mortals have, it is true, a father, God the Father who created us. We are, it is true, His children, but, be it observed, we are "children of wrath," children who have lost their right to the heavenly inheritance destined for them, children who have been justly rejected, disowned by their father. Thus we do indeed deserve to be called poor. Yet let us take courage; poor and destitute as we are, we still have a father, the Holy Spirit. For He it is who lovingly adopts the disinherited; He it is who in the regenerating waters of baptism makes us who are children of wrath to be born again as the children of God; He it is who as a kind and tender father nourishes and fortifies us by the holy sacraments; He it is of whom the Apostle speaks when he says: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) Wherefore give thanks to the divine Spirit for His fatherly loving-kindness, and

ask yourself whether you can at this present moment say that you are really and truly His child.

2d. Consider that the Holy Spirit is the Father of those who are actually poor. Poverty is one of the consequences of sin and dates from the moment when God said: "Cursed is the earth for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." (Gen. iii. 17, 18.) The lot of the poor was indeed terribly sad until the advent of Christ. God appeared to regard them as His step-children; they were abandoned and despised by men, until at length the "Father of the poor" appeared, the Holy Ghost came to their aid. See how He immediately preferred the poor to the rich. He chose a poor Virgin to be His spouse; poor fishermen were the first on whom He poured forth in richest measure the treasures of His grace; and in His spiritual kingdom, the community of Christian believers in Jerusalem, there was no distinction between poor and rich, for they had all things in common like brethren. And as He was then, so is He now the Father of the poor, for where He holds undisputed sway, where His grace is all-effectual, the hungry are fed, the thirsty are given drink, the naked are clothed. Men and women who are "filled with the Holy Ghost" erect hospitals and found Orders for the care of the sick and needy, and dedicate themselves to the service of poor suffering humanity. O my soul, look with wondering admiration on this great Father of the poor; give thanks to Him this day and humbly adore Him.

3d. Consider that the Holy Spirit is the Father of the spiritually poor. The Spirit of the Lord speaking by the mouth of the prophet Osee, says: "I will lead her into the wilderness and I will speak to her heart." (Osee ii. 14.) The Holy Ghost Himself and all the souls whom He inspires know only too well that the riches, the pleasures, the turmoil of the world leave the soul so destitute and comfortless that she is forced bitterly to exclaim in the words of that king who had tasted all that earth can offer: "Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity." But those whose hearts are filled with the Holy Ghost

perceive that to forsake this world where wealth is worshipped, to hide oneself amid the poverty and barrenness of a desert-like solitude is that which makes the soul truly rich and above measure happy. As in the early Church at Jerusalem, the first-fruits of Christianity, so now in the same manner the Holy Ghost is the Father of the poor; through the power of His grace He begets sons and daughters who, impelled by His spirit, forsake the luxuries of the world and fly into seclusion, where they embrace voluntary poverty and renounce all things for the love of God. You, my soul, are such a child of that Father of the poor. You also have espoused the bride of the Holy Ghost, holy poverty. But woe betide you, if you have not been faithful to that spouse. If like Ananias and Sapphira you have kept back a part, if you do not sacrifice your all, the words of the wise Cassian may be applied to you: "I hardly know how to speak of a ridiculous weakness on the part of some Religious. After they have parted with everything that they called their own in the world, in the cloister they cling to trifles, they hold to some comfort of an insignificant nature, and that with such tenacity and mental disquiet that the anxiety concerning these trifles far outweighs the attachment they felt to their former possessions." Such souls are not poor in spirit, they are not true children of the Father of the poor. Therefore ponder well these weighty words of St. Bonaventure: "What madness it is on our part if after we have abandoned what is greater, to our own injury we cling to what is lesser, a particular cell, a certain book, a special habit, etc. When once we have shown our contempt for the world, renounced the claims of affection to our relatives, imprisoned ourselves in the cloister as in a dungeon, and even given up our own will, ought we not to strain every nerve lest through our own folly and negligence all that we have done should be but labor lost?"

SATURDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.**ON THE HOLY GHOST AS THE SPIRIT OF REST.**

Imagine a beautiful, mild summer evening following upon the heat and unrest of the day. All around a hallowed silence reigns. Not even a light breeze stirs the tops of the trees; you scarcely hear a leaf rustle in the branches; even the song of the birds is hushed. At such moments what an indescribable sense of repose, of happiness descends upon the soul; one feels it to be a foretaste of the eternal, blissful rest in the kingdom of Heaven. Now what the calm of such an eventide is to us after the heat of the day in the natural order, that the Holy Spirit is to us in the spiritual order. In her hymn the Church says of Him: "*In labore requies, in aestu tempesties:*" "In toil Thou art refreshment sweet, pleasant coolness after heat," and this is indeed true and just.

1st. Consider that the life of the unhappy sinner upon earth is one of grievous toil and trouble. Amid his labor and drudgery he seeks solace in worldly amusements and only becomes more depressed; he seeks for gratification in the indulgence of carnal lusts and only finds cause for sadness; he seeks relief in the pleasures nature affords and only meets with fresh burdens. So life passes away and is nothing but labor and sorrow. Man seeks rest and refreshment and fails to find them because he does not seek for them where alone they are really to be found, in Him of whom it is said: "*In labore requies, in aestu tempesties.*" Yes, the Holy Ghost alone gives rest to the wretched sinner; only He can allay the heat of concupiscence with the cooling streams of His grace. Has not your own experience, my soul, often taught you the truth of this?

2d. Consider that here below the just also groan under the burden and heat of arduous, onerous labor, of heavy trials. Look how David, the man after God's own heart, was ruthlessly persecuted by Saul, and how his own son

Absalom sought to compass his death. Look how holy Job sat on the dunghill, worn with pain and want of sleep, and how the chaste Susanna's life was for some time in danger. These just persons and many others like them must have cried to God in the words of the Psalmist: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in even unto my soul." (Ps. lxviii. 2.) And yet how calm they remained amid all their trouble and unrest, how cool in the heat of life's battle. David, when chased from place to place, obliged to fly from Saul and Absalom, serenely composes his psalms; Job in the midst of suffering and tribulation adores the wise providence of God without a murmur; and the three children sing their canticle of praise in the fiery furnace with as much composure as if they were walking in the cool shade of a pleasant wood. Whence is this? Oh how can you ask; you know that it is the Holy Ghost who works these wonders, it is that God of whom the Church says: "*In labore requies, in aestu temperies.*" My soul, if you were the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, you would feel very differently amid your toil, your hardships, your conflicts, your temptations; how much greater would be the composure, the equanimity you would display! Wherefore before the week in which we celebrate the coming of the Holy Ghost comes to a close, repeat once more the invocation, "Come, Holy Ghost, Thou who art in toil refreshment sweet, pleasant coolness after heat."

3d. Consider that perfect repose is not to be found here below. That is a gift the Holy Spirit holds in reserve for us hereafter. On earth we must content ourselves with a few spare rays of that celestial light that beams eternally calm and bright. "In this life"—we read in the Imitation of Christ—"thou art never secure, but as long as thou livest thou hast always need of spiritual weapons. Thou art in the midst of enemies and art assailed on the right and on the left. Lay not thyself out for much rest, but for great patience. Seek true peace not on earth but in Heaven." (B. iii. ch. 35.) Observe that the Church does not merely say of the Holy Ghost that He is rest

and refreshment, but rest in toil, refreshment after heat. Wherefore go on your way here below in labor, conflict, struggle, and be satisfied with the few cooling drops the Holy Spirit vouchsafes to distil upon you now, for ere long the day will come when you will be able to sing in glad and grateful strains: "After toil eternal rest, after heat refreshment sweet, this Thou givest, Spirit blest."

TRINITY SUNDAY.

ON THE TRIUNE GOD.

Before commencing your meditation to-day, endeavor, my soul, to soar aloft to the celestial regions, there, surrounded by the shining choirs of angels and of saints, to gaze in spirit upon the glorious triune God. Picture Him to yourself in as far as you can, as He is described by the prophet Isaias (ch. vi.) sitting upon a throne high and elevated. Before it stand the seraphim; they cry one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of Thy glory!"

1st. Consider that there are many similes and images which are employed to illustrate and elucidate to us this mystery. As the soul, which is made in the image of God, is a spiritual, indivisible, imperishable being, so is the triune God in His divine essence. Furthermore, as the soul of man contains three powers, the understanding, the will and the memory, and yet is but one soul, so there are three Persons, the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost in the Godhead, and yet but one God. St. Augustine employs other comparisons in reference to this exalted mystery. "The spring," he says, "cannot be called a river, nor the river a spring, nor again can the draught drawn from the spring be itself called a spring. Yet the water in the spring, in the river and in the goblet whence thou dost drink is one and the self-same." But if you exercise your mind to the utmost in meditating upon this mystery, you will never with your finite understanding be able to

grasp, much less perfectly comprehend, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

2d. The triune nature of the Godhead is and ever will be an incomprehensible mystery. St. Augustine speaks very beautifully on this point. "How," he asks, "canst thou expect to comprehend the divine nature? Better were it didst thou acknowledge thyself incapable of comprehending it; for God would not be God were He not greater than our powers of comprehension. Let us rejoice in having so great a God, and since our intellect is not capable of grasping the mystery of His nature, let us not pry into it, but stand fast in the faith, and give up all useless research." How many things there are in nature that we cannot understand! Pause and reflect upon this fact. Can you understand how the dry, withered seed can blossom and produce splendid fruit? How the ugly chrysalis can be transformed into the gaily painted butterfly? Can you understand how thousands of minute animalculæ can exist upon a hair an inch long, creatures which when placed under a powerful lens are seen to possess eyes, a mouth, and other organs? Can you understand how these infinitesimally small beings can be so prolific that in the course of a single day they are multiplied a thousandfold? How then can you expect to comprehend the triune nature of the Godhead? That mystery will only be elucidated, unveiled to our sight in Heaven, and the contemplation of it will be to us a source of infinite and ineffable delight.

3d. Consider this subject, one which is so difficult of comprehension, the external operation of the Holy Trinity. Contemplate with admiring wonder the action of God the Father in the work of creation, of God the Son in the redemption, of God the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of mankind. Meditate especially on this sublime, this elevating thought: I, a miserable mortal, a worm of earth, am permitted to love the glorious triune God, and I am loved by Him. From all eternity, even before I was called into existence, this great and wonderful God in three Persons thought of me, and decreed my creation,

redemption, sanctification. Nay more, my soul may actually become the dwelling-place of the most Holy Trinity, whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, for Christ has said: "We will come to him and make our abode with him." (St. John xiv. 23.) Wherefore, my soul, bewail heartily your ingratitude, your sinfulness; extol and magnify to-day the all-bounteous Trinity, and resolve from henceforth to repeat with greater love and devotion the *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*, Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.

MONDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

ON THE IMMENSITY AND OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

Think of the great, wide world with its many countries, its countless towns and villages, its hills, heights, and mountains, its springs, rivers, and oceans; think of the boundless vault of heaven with its millions upon millions of shining orbs, each of which is a fresh world, or the centre of a fresh system of worlds, and then rise yet higher, apprehend the sublime thought that there is something still more boundless, more immeasurable than all that the universe taken together contains, and that is the infinite, omnipresent God. Fix your attention to-day upon this subject.

1st. Consider the word which the Lord spoke by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias: "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (xxiii. 24.) Thus your Lord and God fills this vast immeasurable universe; He is everywhere; He rules everywhere; He is wholly everywhere, wholly in every part and in every being. "I sought the Lord," says St. Augustine, "in the world without, I sought Him who was within me." Yes, concentrate your mind on this elevating thought: that you yourself are filled with God, that He is present within you, around you, that He envelops you as the air you breathe. Rodriguez says: "Some

represent to themselves the world as filled by God, as indeed it is, and themselves in the midst of the infinite ocean of the divine immensity as a sponge in the ocean." This is an apt simile, but observe, only a simile.

2d. Consider the saying of the Apostle: "In Him we live and move and are." (Acts xvii. 28.) Thus in God we live and move as a bird in the air, as a fish in the water, its native element. The bird may fly whither he will, as high as he will, he cannot depart out of the air; the fish may swim here and there as he lists, but he will always remain in the water, and so it is with thee, O man; at no time, in no place canst thou escape out of the presence of the omnipresent Godhead. Hear what the Psalmist says: "If I ascend into heaven, O Lord, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. cxxxviii. 8-10.) How foolish it is then of the sinner, how blindly foolish, to wait for the darkness to do his evil deeds in secret, under cover of the night! Alas for him! no darkness hides from God; He is all-seeing and omnipresent, you cannot conceal yourself from Him, you are never hidden from His sight. This truth is for us both a warning and a consolation.

3d. Consider how important it is and how profitable for us constantly to remember that God is present everywhere. This remembrance of itself holds us back from sin, gives solace in the season of affliction, courage in danger and strength in time of temptation. "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii. 4.) So speaks the Royal Prophet, filled with a sense of the omnipresence of God. For Priests and Religious this thought is especially important and profitable: "As there is not a single moment of time," says St. Ambrose, "when we are not enjoying some benefit from the bountiful and merciful hand of God, so there ought to be no moment of time when we have not God in our thoughts." And St. Bernard adds: "Let the monk continually bear in mind

that God sees all his actions, all his thoughts, and let him consider that time to be lost in which he has been forgetful of the divine presence." How has your conduct tallied with this admonition, my soul? Ask yourself this question seriously. Select one of the different methods whereby to preserve a continual remembrance of God's presence proposed by spiritual writers; and the better to attain your end follow the example of St. Francis and the teaching of St. Basil, who tells us that everything ought to be to us an occasion inciting us to raise our heart to God. When we take our meals, let us give God thanks; when we put on our clothes, let us thank Him likewise; if we walk out into the country, let us praise Him who has made it so fair and so fruitful; if we look upward to the stars, let us glorify Him who created them. If all we see, all we make use of speaks to us of God, we shall have Him constantly in our thoughts, we shall walk continually in His presence.

TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY SUNDAY.

ON THE GOOD PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

Think of God as of a loving Father, looking down upon the earth, the work of His hands; think how He disposes, conducts, ordains all that happens upon earth; now with the just anger of a Father punishing His disobedient children, now lovingly rewarding those who do His will. Think how He feeds the hungry ravens and clothes the lilies of the field; and when you have impressed upon your mind a vivid conception of your heavenly Father, proceed to meditate on the following truths:

1st. Consider the words of Holy Scripture: "God hath equally care of all." (Wisd. vi. 8.) "Divine Providence," says Hugh of St. Victor, "cares for and provides for the welfare of all creatures that He has made; He abandons none of those who belong to Him and are subject to Him. He cares even for irrational creatures; His providence extends even to the smallest leaf upon the tree, the finest

hair upon our head. Wherever thou mayst be, whatever thy circumstances, His eye looks down upon thee in loving kindness. Hence there is nothing that happens by chance, or from mere accident. The omniscient God knows all that happens even before it happens; nothing takes place without His permission, and again He it is who ultimately guides all things, both good and evil, to the goal which He has appointed." Only look, my soul, at your own past life. How often you have at first thought something that occurred to be the result of chance, and later on you have perceived it to have been ordained by God, and intended by His bounty and wisdom to promote your advantage.

2d. Consider how belief in divine Providence invites us to place our entire confidence in God. Trust in God is the very best means of obtaining from Him assistance and grace. St. Bernard says: "If you have firm hope, great confidence in God, He will do great things for you and by means of you; but if your hope is feeble, your confidence wavering, He will do but little." The Lord Himself, speaking by the lips of the prophet, says: "Because he hoped in Me I will deliver him; I will protect him because he hath known My name." (Ps. xc. 14.) Members of Religious Orders have, as Rodriguez asserts, special grounds for promising themselves the support of God in performing the obligations of their office. For since they have undertaken those duties out of obedience, they have done so in compliance with God's command, and He will therefore give them the necessary assistance. Moreover it is pre-eminently the teaching of the seraphic St. Francis, which he confirms by his example, that we should abandon ourselves with entire confidence to divine Providence. How frequently instances of a striking nature are met with in the annals of our Order, or even in the course of your own life, of dearth and distress being the lot of those who relied on their own foresight and prudence, like the worldly-wise children of men, whilst abundance prevailed in those Communities whose members regarded themselves as God's pensioners, dependent solely on divine Providence.

3d. Consider how greatly such want of confidence displeases God. This want of confidence is in reality a lack of faith in divine Providence; it is a practical denial of one of the divine attributes. It is an insult offered to God's honor. Consider that it was precisely such mistrust which provoked Him so often to anger against the Israelites, nay, that He punished a man so great, of such eminent sanctity as Moses for a slight want of confidence with the stern prohibition to enter the promised land: "Thou hast seen it with thy eyes, and shalt not pass over to it." (Deut. xxxiv. 4.) How frequently, my soul, in the course of your life a plan you had most carefully arranged, a project formed with the best intentions, a work undertaken with the holiest aim has proved a failure. Do you ask the reason of this? It was because you relied on your own powers, on human aid, on earthly means more than upon God. Hear what Jehova said to King Asa by the mouth of His prophet: "Because thou hast had confidence in the king of Syria and not in the Lord thy God, therefore hath the army of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand." (II. Paral. xvi. 7.) Learn from this meditation to trust for the future more completely in divine Providence; and if you are a Son or Daughter of St. Francis, let your contemplation of this subject render you more alive to the truth that in these days of worldly wisdom and self-confidence unconditional abandonment to the good providence of God is the vital principle, the chief feature of the Franciscan Order, and the source whence it derives its greatest blessings.

THE EVE OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE MANNA OF THE OLD AND OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Imagine yourself a witness of the scene enacted in the desert on the day when for the first time the manna, the wondrous food, the divine nourishment was showered down from Heaven; when the children of Israel, hasten-

ing in joyful excitement out of their tents, exclaimed, in amazement: "What is this!" (Ex. xvi. 15.) Well might they be astonished at this miracle to which the words of the Church may aptly be applied: "Thou hast given them Bread from Heaven, containing in itself all sweetness." But not to the children of Israel alone is this bread given; it is also given to us. We too have Bread from Heaven, the Holy Eucharist, of which the manna is a type and a shadow. Wherefore, my soul, as a preparation for the feast of the morrow, institute a comparison between the manna of the Old and of the New Dispensation.

1st. Consider that the Bread from Heaven was not given to the Israelites until they had already left the Egyptian servitude, passed through the Red Sea, and consumed the provisions that they brought with them out of Egypt. If then this manna is a type of the Bread of Heaven of the New Testament, consider well the beautiful words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, who bids us observe that we can only eat that manna worthily when we are released from the bondage of sin, when we have passed through the Red Sea of penance, thereby washing our souls in the cleansing blood of Christ, and have got rid of the last remnants of the old leaven of Egypt. Ask yourself, my soul, ask yourself seriously if this is the case with you, for on this it depends whether you celebrate to-morrow's feast in a worthy or unworthy manner.

2d. Consider another peculiarity of the Old-Testament manna. God did not suffer it to fall upon the earth before the pure dew of Heaven had covered the face of the ground, lest the celestial bread should be sullied by contact with the dust and dirt. What a lesson this fact contains for you, my soul. Remember you are the soil whereon the manna of the New Testament descends. Think how much holier, purer, more sublime this Bread of Heaven is than the other. Most truly it is so, for it is not merely the Bread of Heaven which you receive, it is the Lord of Heaven, Himself perfect, intrinsic Purity and the Author of all purity. It is His most sacred humanity, His most pure body, born of a pure and chaste

Virgin, which you receive. How clean, how spotless the ground ought to be whereon this manna falls! Consider this to-day, and do not be satisfied with decorating the church, adorning the convent or house in preparation for the feast on the morrow, but cleanse and deck your soul above all. Cleanse it from the defilement of sin; cleanse it from the earthly dust of reprehensible proclivities and attachments, which cloud the clear surface of the soul's mirror, and make it your chief solicitude so to prepare the soil that it may be free from all impurities when the heavenly manna falls upon it.

3d. Consider that the Israelites were obliged to gather the manna in the early morning, before the sun rose, for when its heat began to be felt, the celestial food melted away and lost all its sweet flavor. He who desired to taste the manna in all its sweetness under the Old Dispensation had to watch and rise early, and it is the same under the New Covenant. The more you exert yourself, the more pains you take and time you spend in preparing yourself, the more fully will you taste the sweetness of the heavenly manna. But if you are slothful and drowsy, if you will not put yourself to any inconvenience to find time to make a proper preparation, then you will assuredly take little delight in the heavenly banquet. Oh see that to-day at least, on the eve of the great festival of that manna, you make a careful preparation, and to-morrow, in the early hours of the morning raise your heart in gladness to Heaven, whence comes this delicious spiritual food. Above all, in order that you may taste the sweetness of this manna more fully than you have done heretofore, make a resolution for the future to follow the counsels of a well-known spiritual writer, who says: "It is meet, on the day when we are to receive Holy Communion, to spend a portion of the morning in preparation. We should also let it be our last thought on the evening before, that we are going to approach the altar. When we wake in the night let us think of our communion, and on opening our eyes in the morning let this be the first, the one idea that presents itself to our mind."

Thus we shall act like the Israelites of old, and gather the heavenly manna before the rising of the sun.

THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE INFINITE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

To-day we celebrate the sweetest, most beautiful festival of all the year. Fix your whole attention, my soul, on this glorious feast, and participate deeply in the holy joy of the Church, for whom to-day the stone walls of her earthly temples enclose a space too circumscribed, and who therefore issues forth into the open air and makes the streets and squares, the meadows and woods resound with hymns of exultant rejoicing in honor of the most adorable Sacrament. Behold your God carried through the streets to-day under the form of a piece of bread, and oh! how infinite is the charity this fact reveals.

1st. Consider that God could not give us a more brilliant, more striking proof of His love than He does in this Sacrament. It belongs to love to delight in being continually in the presence of the beloved, and to feel His absence to be intolerable. Thus since our Lord loved us so tenderly, He devised a means, when the time came for Him to return to His Father, whereby He might quit the earth and yet not wholly leave it; that as when He came down from Heaven He still remained in Heaven, so He might reascend to Heaven and yet not leave the earth, remaining upon it under the form of bread. Furthermore, it is one of the properties of love to bear the beloved object constantly in mind. For this reason those who are attached to one another by a warm affection generally, when the hour of parting comes, give one another some souvenir. Jesus Christ, who is Love eternal, also desired, when parting from us, to leave behind Him some remembrance of Himself, and since none was great enough to satisfy His boundless love, He Himself re-

mained behind under the form of bread. O my soul, when you meditate upon all this, what appears to you most wondrous, the love of Christ or your own unconcern?

2d. Consider how the love of Jesus is furthermore displayed by the fact that He instituted this greatest of sacraments under the form of bread. One of our theologians says: "In order not to lay a burden upon us, and to render the reception of His benefits easy and pleasant to us, our Lord on His departure left behind Him that gift beyond all compare, His most sacred body and blood under the appearance of bread. For if He had instituted this Holy Sacrament under the form of something costly and valuable, such as a pearl, a precious jewel, a rare and delicious perfume, or something in a certain degree corresponding better to the sublimity of the sacrament, we could not make such free and frequent use of it, it would not be equally within the reach of poor and rich, of high and low, as is now the case, since He gives Himself to us under the form of bread." O unspeakable charity of our God! Not His grandeur and dignity, but our need, nay, our convenience is the measure whereby He metes out to us His graces. He chooses an ordinary object, one ready to hand, commodious, to be found everywhere in abundance, as the medium whereby to dwell amongst us, to unite Himself to us, rather than one more commensurate with His exalted dignity. And yet, my soul, you have so little respect for the God who shows such consideration for you, that you allow the reception of this sacrament, the visits you make to it, the homage you pay it, to depend upon your convenience or your caprice.

3d. Meditate further on what St. Bonaventure says of the love of our Lord: "After Jesus had delivered us by His blood out of the power of the devil, and made us equal to the angels, He desired to give us the food of angels for our greater happiness. And since it is impossible for us poor worms of earth to feed upon the Bread of Life as the angels do in Heaven, by the clear beatific vision of the Godhead in celestial glory, He conceals this glory, upon which we could not bear to look, under the form of

common bread, thus placing it within our power to eat the food of angels here below in the simplest, easiest manner.” O wondrous love of God! Can you, O my soul, remain any longer cold and indifferent? The seraphic Father, St. Francis, was inspired and inflamed with so fervent a love for this sacrament of love, that the ardent devotion wherewith he received it touched all who witnessed it, and kindled the flame of devotion in their hearts likewise. Would that the meditation of to-day might, my soul, have the effect of stimulating you to such fervor and recollection whenever you stand at the altar or kneel at the Communion table, that your demeanor may be a source of edification to others; and above all to-day, when you take part in the solemn procession of Corpus Christi, see that you conduct yourself so as to edify and not scandalize your neighbor.

FRIDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR AS THE TREE OF LIFE.

Picture to yourself to-day, my soul, the tree of life that stood in the midst of paradise. How fair to behold, how pleasant to the taste, how strengthening to those who eat of it must the fruit of that tree have been, since it had power to impart to them life in fulness, nay, life immortal! He who ate of that tree was never tortured by sickness, never subject to death or a prey to corruption. Yet no mortal was ever so fortunate as to eat of that tree of paradise, but, thousands, nay, millions eat daily of another tree of life, that they may escape eternal death, and this tree of life blossoms and bears fruit in our midst; it is the adorable Sacrament of the Altar.

1st. Consider these words of our Lord: “This is the Bread that cometh down from Heaven, that if a man eat of it he may not die.” (St. John vi. 50.) Here it will be seen that Christ says the very same of the Blessed Sacra-

ment that God the Father once spoke concerning the tree of life in paradise. Both the one and the other are said to possess the self-same virtue of preserving from death. "The eucharistic bread," says St. Charles Borromeo, "imparts to the faithful power to keep free from sin, to withstand the force of temptation; it is the divine medicine of the soul, whereby it is preserved from being infected by the deadly poison of sin." Furthermore, St. Laurence Justinian declares that by partaking of this celestial bread enmities are abolished, thoughts of bitterness and hatred are extinguished, dissensions are set at rest, strife and quarrels are suppressed, in a word, everything that endangers the life of the soul is eliminated or not suffered to approach.

2d. Consider this also which our Lord says: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." (v. 52.) Here again we find the identical expression employed that God the Father made use of speaking of the tree of life in paradise: "lest he take also of the tree of life and live for ever." (Gen. iii. 22.) Thus the Most Holy Sacrament has not only the power which we saw it to possess in the first point of this meditation, that of preserving us from the death of the soul and from all that leads to that spiritual death, it also has power to sustain the life of the soul and maintain it for ever. This bread does indeed confer on us strength to persevere in justice, and when our mortal life is ended to enter upon life immortal. St. Bernardine of Siena says on this subject: "The Bread of Heaven fortifies the powers both of mind and body. It imparts strength to the mind that it may persevere in virtue, to the body that it may not fall into sin. Thus both soul and body attain eternal life." Reflect on this truth attentively, how vivifying, how invigorating this celestial food is to you in the pilgrimage of your earthly existence! how powerful it is in supporting you in the way of justice, in stimulating you in the pursuit of perfection! It is that miraculous nourishment that, like the food given to the prophet Elias of old, in the strength of which he walked unto the mount of God, Horeb, gives us also power to at-

tain eternal life. St. Chrysostom very justly says that we ought, when we leave the holy table, to resemble lions breathing out fire to strike terror into the devils. Is it not so with yourself? Do you not feel after every fresh Communion a perceptible increase of courage and strength? And thus if you frequently partake of the fruit of this tree of life you will have life here on earth, by the practice of good works, and by persevering in good works, you will have life eternal hereafter.

3d. Consider furthermore these words of our Lord: "And the bread I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." (v. 52.) This tree of life, the Blessed Sacrament, as it preserves the individual soul, so it preserves the whole world from spiritual death and gives it life eternal. In order to grasp this truth, just think of this miserable, guilty world, of the sin and vice, the crimes and transgressions daily, hourly committed, which continually, like the blood of Abel, cry to Heaven for vengeance, challenge the retributive justice of God displayed in days of yore, when the earth was drowned in the waters of the deluge, and visited with fire and brimstone on account of its wickedness. Why is God so long-suffering now? What restrains His chastising hand? It is the Bread that is given for the life of the world. However loudly the sins of the world cry to Heaven for vengeance, the Bread of Life cries yet more loudly for reconciliation, for pardon. And if the wretched, thankless world does not acknowledge, or recognize this benefit and blessing, do you, my soul, at least, not show yourself ungrateful, but resolve, as the fruit of to-day's meditation, to spend some portion of each day in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, giving thanks, not for yourself alone, but also on behalf of the busy world which never stays to utter a word of praise or gratitude for this great gift, the Bread of Life which our Lord has given us from Heaven, and of which whoso eateth will live forever.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH CHRIST IN HOLY COMMUNION.

If the Bread of Heaven only had the power, which we saw it to have in our meditation yesterday, to preserve the soul from death and give it eternal life, it would be an exceedingly great privilege for us mortals to be permitted to eat that Bread. But the celestial manna does yet more for those who partake of it. Think, my soul, of the moment when you receive Holy Communion. What takes place then? Oh ponder this in amazement and adoring love: In that hallowed moment the most intimate union is effected between Christ and your soul.

1st. Consider what our Lord says: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in him." (St. John vi. 57.) O wondrous promise! According to this, as often as the blood of Christ is received in Holy Communion, Christ Himself, whole and undivided, with His glorified body enters into the heart of the Christian and remains with him, uniting Himself to the soul of the communicant so closely that he abides in Christ and Christ in him. How inconceivable is the dignity thus conferred upon man! The only-begotten Son of God did indeed exalt the Blessed Virgin most highly by dwelling within her chaste womb as in a tabernacle of pure gold, but no less great is the honor done to you, O Christian, since this same Jesus vouchsafes to take up His abode within you, not merely once, but as often as you may desire. Oh that you were a dwelling-place fit to receive so great a Guest!

2d. Consider what the Apostle says: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) These words are literally fulfilled in the case of those who communicate worthily. After this union with Christ our soul lives another, a new life. Observe this attentively: As material

food assimilates itself to the body, becomes one and the same as him who eats it, so in a certain sense he who eats the Bread of angels becomes one and the same as that celestial Bread of which he partakes, although the body of Christ is not changed into our nature, but the contrary: we are changed into Christ, our nature is transformed into His. Hence our Lord said to St. Augustine: "I am the Bread of the strong. Grow and thou shalt eat of Me, but I shall not be transformed into thee; thou shalt be transformed into Me." "This sacrament," St. Thomas says, "converts man into God and makes him like unto Him. Just as fire changes into itself all on which it lays hold, so is the action of the all-consuming fire of the Godhead." A man who is thus transformed can truly say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." Reflect upon this sublime, this ennobling truth.

3d. Consider furthermore these words of our Lord: "As I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me." (v. 58.) Thus Christ shall not only live in you, but you shall live by Him; that is to say, in your whole life, in your thoughts, your words, your actions, His glory, the accomplishment of His will must be the one aim you have in view. Of what profit will it be to you that, in consequence of your having received Holy Communion, Christ lives in you, if you do not live with Christ, if you do not become assimilated to Christ, if you do not resemble Christ in your life? This is what union with Christ demands from us, that we should on our part live by Him, and this the Apostle exhorts us to do when he says: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14); put on His humility, His charity, His purity, His justice. O my soul, if you were thoroughly penetrated by this thought: Christ lives in me, would you not regard it as a sacred duty to resemble Him in your life, to live by Him? Should you permit the tongue whereon His most holy body rested to engage in the service of sin; should you permit your heart, now become the dwelling-place of the most high God, to be sullied by evil desires and unruly passions? See therefore that you impress deeply on your mind to-day

the words spoken by Jesus Christ and by His Apostle: "Christ liveth in me"; "He that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me."

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

Look, my soul, in imagination at the terrible scene in the Garden of Olives, when our Lord received the traitor's kiss from the apostle Judas. See in what a shameful manner that wretched hypocrite abuses that mark of tender affection, that sign of intimate friendship. It is a revolting sight. There stands Jesus, the impersonification of charity, of mercy, and the unhappy apostle, concealing his vile treachery and base ingratitude, dares to press his lips to His cheeks. Sketch for yourself that sad picture, and then remind yourself that the same scene is re-enacted as often as a Christian approaches the table of the Lord, like the miserable guest in to-day's Gospel, without a wedding garment, that is to say, communicates unworthily. In order to awaken within your breast a salutary fear and horror of so fatal an act proceed to consider the following saying of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis:

1st. "He who communicates unworthily treats the Lamb of God with contumely and tramples Him under foot." Think for a moment, my soul, of the infinite greatness, the unspeakable sanctity, the boundless charity of the Lamb of God; think how, weary and footsore, He sought you; think how He submitted to be cruelly slain for your redemption; nay more, think how He gives Himself under the form of food for your spiritual sustenance. Then, touched to the heart by the charity of Christ towards you, ponder the words of St. Francis quoted above, and assuredly you will conceive a salutary dread of receiving Holy Communion unworthily. John the Baptist trembled and shrank from pouring the sacred waters of the Jordan upon the head of the Lamb of God, and shall you not re-

coil in horror from the thought of trampling under foot that same Lamb of God?

2d. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul: “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself.” (I. Cor. xi. 29.) It belongs to the nature of divine things (and the divine food of which we are speaking is no exception to this rule) to be highly beneficial when used aright, and equally prejudicial when used wrongfully. Thus the consequences of unworthy Communion are no less fatal than the fruits of a worthy reception of this life-giving Sacrament are blissful. The disdain for the Blessed Sacrament displayed by the sacrilegious communicant, who does not distinguish the Lord’s body from ordinary food, brings death upon the soul and judgment upon the head of the sinner. This judgment is not unfrequently carried into execution even in this life, before its full accomplishment in eternal damnation hereafter, for we see such sacrilegious persons overtaken by sudden death, grave misfortunes, grievous sickness and other calamities, most of all by that most terrible spiritual malady which is known as obduracy or hardness of heart. Alas! to how many does that disease prove fatal! To how many may these words of St. Jerome be applied: “Woe betide thee, because for so many years thou hast eaten thy bread to no purpose. For in nothing hast thou overcome thyself, in nothing hast thou mortified thyself, no single fault hast thou corrected. Thou must indeed be seriously sick, since the food thou eatest fails to nourish thee.” O my soul, take pity on those who suffer from this sickness; pray for them that they may come to a better mind; say a Pater after every Communion, every time you go to adoration, for those who perhaps daily eat and drink their own judgment; and beware lest any of your penitents, if you are a Confessor, approach the holy table with so terrible a result. But if you are anxious yourself to avoid incurring this judgment, consider what the Apostle enjoins on the Corinthians.

3d. “For let a man prove himself” (I. Cor. xi. 28) “before he eat of that Bread.” According to St. Augustine

the means of escaping the divine judgment is this: Self-accusation in examination of one's conscience and in Confession, besides an act of penance, which will impart the consoling assurance that no mortal sin weighs upon the soul; this self-judgment will avert the divine judgment with its strict severity, and only leave the mercy and compassion of which we stand in need. Thus a clean conscience, gained by stern self-judgment in the Sacrament of Penance, is the wedding garment, the absence of which would be our damnation. Wherefore, my soul, be assiduous in your daily general and particular examination of conscience, and thus you will each time prepare yourself duly for a worthy Communion. For although you would not be so impious as wittingly to approach the holy table in a state of mortal sin, yet it might perchance so happen that through some negligence on your part you were unconscious of your perilous state. Let the resolution to guard against this ignorance by a careful self-scrutiny be the chief fruit of to-day's meditation; thus you will be preserved from communicating unworthily.

MONDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE GUILT OF THOSE WHO COMMUNICATE WITH HEARTS FULL OF ENMITY.

Look, my soul, on the crucified Redeemer; see how when hanging upon the cross He prays in His infinite charity even for His enemies, for those who are torturing Him in so barbarous a manner; and then say to yourself: This most loving Jesus comes to my heart in Holy Communion, comes to unite Himself to me in the closest union. But how can that be if He who on the cross pardoned His enemies finds within my breast a heart animated by hatred and vindictiveness, by feelings of enmity and rancor? Would it not be a deliberate insult to invite the God whose property it is to forgive and to have mercy to take up His abode in such a dwelling-place? Let our medita-

tion to-day be upon the means of avoiding so grievous a sin.

1st. Consider that according to the teaching of the Council of Trent our blessed Lord instituted the adorable Sacrament of the Altar and bequeathed it to His Church as a symbol of love and concord. As bread is composed of many grains of corn mingled in one mass, and likewise wine consists of the juice of many grapes mixed together, so the multitude of the faithful who eat this sacred bread and drink of this sacred chalice ought to be one body; they ought to be one heart and one soul, because they all partake in an equal measure of the body of Christ, which is one and undivided. Thus it was amongst the early Christians, of whom it is expressly stated that they, receiving every day the Most Holy Sacrament, had but one heart and one soul. And you, O Christian, can it be that in direct contradiction to the object and the nature of this Holy Sacrament, you receive it with hatred and dissension in your heart? Listen to and ponder well this saying of the Venerable Bede: "Those who eat this bread must not be at variance with one another, for they are nourished with one bread, they form one body, they are one in Christ."

2d. Consider how Holy Communion, if it be received with a heart full of enmity, recalls only too forcibly the kiss of Judas. St. Bernard, when speaking of the meeting between our Lord and the traitor on the Mount of Olives, says: "Bloodthirsty wretch! How was it, O Jesus, that Thou didst not shrink, when he approached Thee, from allowing his lips to touch Thy sacred lips, actually to kiss those lips! What hadst Thou, sinless Lamb of God, in common with a ravening wolf? It was Thy infinite charity that permitted the act, the charity which would omit nothing that could possibly touch that hardened heart." These words, employed by St. Bernard in reference to our Lord's meeting with His miserable betrayer, may be applied to the union of that same Lord in Holy Communion with a heart that is full of malignity. Think, you who are implacable and desirous of revenge,

Jesus offers you not merely His cheek to be kissed, He gives Himself to you, He, the God of charity, the God of forgiveness and of reconciliation. Yet you are not melted; you continue to cherish feelings of hatred and hostility in the heart where He is present, He the all-merciful, the propitiation for the sins of the world. Does not that afford a more glaring contrast, a still more striking contradiction than that which St. Bernard laments so bitterly? And perhaps, my soul, for weeks or even months you may have been going to the Lord's table in such dispositions!

3d. Consider what our Lord Himself says: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." (St. Matt. v. 23, 24.) Reflect upon these words. No sacrifice, no good work, no mortification, not even a martyr's death is pleasing to God, as long as your brother has anything against you. Even the solemn celebration of the holy sacrifice must be suspended in that case, as Christ Himself commands; for, as Tertullian says: "The peace of God cannot be attained without peace with men; the remission of sin cannot be implored if sin be retained in the heart, and the love of God is incompatible with hatred of the brethren." Perhaps you have long deplored and wept over your coldness at the time of Holy Communion, the absence of all consolation which you experience. Examine your conscience, search and see if your heart is not sullied—though it may be in a very slight degree—by envy, aversion, dissension, enmity? We read in the annals of the Cistercian Order of a certain monk who whenever he went to Holy Communion experienced a sweetness to his palate as of virgin honey, and this delicious flavor generally continued for three days. One day he spoke rather angrily and harshly to one of the Brothers, and went to Holy Communion without having sought a reconciliation. That day instead of the wonted sweet flavor, he tasted nothing

but bitterness, as if he had gall and wormwood in his mouth. Whence is it, my soul, that you have not more consolation and delight in Holy Communion?

TUESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON SUITABLE PREPARATION FOR RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION.

In commencing to-day's meditation recall to mind as we are taught to do in that most excellent book, the *Imitation of Christ*, the scrupulous care with which Moses manufactured an ark of incorruptible wood and overlaid it with the purest gold; or endeavor to realize the vast sums Solomon expended, the trouble and pains he took to build a temple for the Lord on Mount Sion; he employed seven years in constructing it and adorned it with a magnificence surpassing anything that had ever been seen before. Then consider what you do to provide an ark not for the tables of the law, but for the Maker of the law and Giver of life; to prepare for Him a dwelling-place, not on Mount Sion, but in your own heart. How careful a preparation is needful in your case!

1st. Consider that according to the teaching of the Council of Trent all that is absolutely required for the worthy reception of Holy Communion is to be in a state of grace; that is to say, to be free from any conscious mortal sin. At the same time it is of great moment sedulously to endeavor by a special preparation to render oneself more fit to go to Holy Communion, for the better we are prepared for the reception of the Sacrament of the Altar, the more plentiful are the graces we receive from it. In order to apprehend this truth more fully, listen to what our Lord said in the revelations to St. Catharine of Sienna: "The graces you receive from this sacrament are proportioned to the preparation you make for its reception." And He added the following illustra-

tion: "One man brings a taper that weighs one ounce, another brings one weighing two ounces, a third brings one four ounces in weight. Each of these tapers is lighted, but as a matter of course, the light of the one that weighs only a single ounce is much feebler than that of the two others."

Would, my soul, that the taper of your desire, of your preparation that is, for Holy Communion were not so small and light, for then how much more ardently would the flame of your fervor and devotion be at such times!

2d. Consider the rules God laid down in the Old Testament concerning the consumption of the paschal lamb; no part of it was to be eaten raw, nor boiled in water, but only roasted at the fire. Here we have from the mouth of the Most High Himself directions as to how we are to partake of the body of the divine Lamb in the Holy Eucharist. It is not to be eaten raw, as those eat it who go up to the table of the Lord without any preparation whatsoever, as if they were going to eat their ordinary food, nor is it merely to be boiled in water; that is to say, the communicant must not content himself with a perfunctory, tepid, brief preparation, but it must be roasted at the fire, i.e., there is to be a previous preparation of a special nature; we must not rest until our hearts glow and are aflame with ardent longing and fervent love. Meditation upon Holy Communion is above all what roasting was for the paschal lamb. "We must," says St. Bernardine, "receive the body of Christ in a spiritual manner; that is to say, we must place before and bring home to our mind His incarnation, His Passion, all He has done and suffered for us." And St. Bonaventure counsels the Christian in so many words to meditate upon one of the mysteries of the Passion before receiving Holy Communion, and acknowledges that he made it his constant practice and his soul was thereby inflamed and melted with the love of God. What have you done in this respect hitherto, and what will you do in future?

3d. Consider that divine grace is indispensable for a worthy preparation. Listen to these beautiful words from

the Imitation: "Know that thou canst not do enough towards this preparation by the merit of what thou thyself doest, although thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else." (B. iv. ch. 12.) Wherefore we must in all humility beseech God to grant us this grace; very possibly the reason why you have been so cold and wanting in devotion at Holy Communion is because you have presumed too much on your own efforts when endeavoring to prepare yourself aright. Pray earnestly; that is the first step towards a worthy preparation. "And if thou hadst not the grace of devotion," as Thomas à Kempis says, "but rather findest thyself dry, continue instant in prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou receivest some crumb or drop of saving grace." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 12.) Thus you will at least manifest your ardent desire to make a good preparation, and that desire in itself will be pleasing to God, according to the words of the Prophet, which you may lay to heart for your comfort: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." (Ps. x. 17.)

WEDNESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN AS OUR INSTRUCTRESS IN REGARD TO THE DEVOUT RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION.

Picture to yourself to-day the most pure, the most holy Virgin, at the moment when, present in the assembly of the Christians who have met together for divine worship after her Son's ascension, she receives Holy Communion. What a beautiful sight for those who were privileged to behold the immaculate Virgin when she received anew the body of her Son under the appearance of bread! Words cannot describe her devotion, her fervor, her love on her reunion with her divine Child. If at such seasons the countenances of the saints have been seen to glow with joy and rapture, as if they had already entered upon

the glorified state, how ardent must have been the flame of devotion, how bright the fire of love that illumined the features of the Blessed Virgin at the time of Holy Communion. Contemplate her in imagination while you meditate upon her perfections.

1st. Consider the faith wherewith she received Holy Communion. Think how lively, how firm must have been the faith that animated her when the Archangel Gabriel announced to her the incomprehensible mystery of the incarnation of Jesus Christ; how that faith was increased and strengthened by the miraculous birth of our Lord; how it was heightened and intensified day by day as she watched the growth of the divine Child, until it ultimately reached its climax when she stood beneath the cross. Then the most signal proof was given of the magnitude, the force of that faith, since not even the appalling sight of the crucified Redeemer, stripped of His garments, covered with wounds, satiated with insults and reproaches, forsaken by God and man, could cause her belief in His divinity, His majesty, His sublime dignity, to waver for a single moment. By this you may form some estimate of the faith wherewith Mary approached the Most Holy Sacrament. Kindle your feeble taper, I beseech you, at the bright, clear flame of her faith, for the amount of devotion experienced at the time of Holy Communion mainly depends on the fervor of the act of faith which is previously made.

2d. Consider the hope and confidence wherewith Mary received Holy Communion. The virtue of the act of hope that we make rests principally on our desire for Him from whom we hope to receive help and grace, and in whom we put our trust. Consequently the more fully our confidence is placed in Christ, the more ardently shall we long to be united with Him. But who can depict the yearning of Mary's heart, her loving desire once more to receive her beloved Child, the Child who was conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, to whom she gave birth, whom she nurtured and brought up, whom she lost in so painful a manner by the death of the cross, to re-

ceive Him anew, not this time to be clasped in her maternal arms, but to dwell within her heart, a heart consumed with the fire of love. The longing that Mary felt was in fact the same as that wherewith on Christmas Eve she anticipated the nativity of the wondrous Infant, as that wherewith she sought the divine Child for three days in the streets of Jerusalem, as that wherewith, standing beside the sepulchre, she awaited the moment of His glorious resurrection. Oh kindle your cold heart at Mary's glowing heart, and before every Communion awaken within your soul the warmest desire to receive your Lord, resting all your hope, all your trust on Him, for on this depends to a great extent the grace imparted in Holy Communion. This we may learn from the example of the saints, for whom it was the source of countless graces but who on their part approached the Blessed Sacrament, enkindled, burning with desire, with intense longing for the Lord they loved. To what object is your hope, the yearning of your soul directed?

3d. Consider the love wherewith Mary received Holy Communion. It may confidently be asserted that no created being ever clung to Jesus with an affection in any way equal to that of Mary. From the very outset how pure and steady was the flame of divine charity burning within the heart of that immaculate Virgin, conceived without the stain of original sin which renders man God's enemy; how hotly the sacred fire of charity glowed within her breast, for it was with no ordinary affection, but with a mother's tender love that she embraced the holy Child, who was at one and the same time her God and the Son of her womb.

Meditate deeply to-day, my soul, on this love that Mary felt; always think of her for a few moments before you go to Communion, in order that your cold heart may be kindled by some spark of her great charity, and pray in the words of Thomas à Kempis: "O Lord my God, my Creator, and my Redeemer, I desire to receive Thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope

and purity as Thy most holy Mother, the glorious Virgin Mary received Thee and longed for Thee." (Imit. B. iv. ch. 17.)

THE OCTAVE OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION AS TAUGHT US BY OUR LORD.

Represent to yourself the scene, no less touching than instructive, which took place in the cenacle immediately before the institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is kneeling upon the ground before the disciples in order to wash their feet. He, the Creator, does this for His creatures, the Lord for His servants, the Master for His disciples. This condescension, this humiliation, this act of self-abasement on our Lord's part immediately preceding the first celebration of the Holy Eucharist is unquestionably not without a mystic signification of no slight importance for ourselves.

1st. Observe that by this washing of feet our Lord intended to teach us how great is the purity of heart required of us when we go to Holy Communion, a purity that consists not merely in freedom from the mire of mortal sin, but even from the dust of venial sin and imperfections. Thus St. Bernard writes: "By the washing of feet our Lord desired to make us understand that when we approach the divine Sacrament of the Altar, we ought to be cleansed not from all mortal sin alone, but also from all venial sins, which are signified by the particles of dust which cleave to the feet." St. Dionysius speaks yet more forcibly when he says: "By this example Christ shows us that He requires us to be cleansed not only from venial sins, but even from the slightest imperfections; he bids us observe that the Priest, before offering the tremendous oblation, only washes the tips of his fingers, not the whole hand, to teach us that we must purify ourselves from every

fault and infirmity, however slight, if we would approach the Holy Sacrament of the Altar."

O my soul, ponder the words of this saint, but do not become over-timid. You are not an ordinary Christian living in the world. Our Lord in calling you to be a Priest and a Religious has shown you a special preference; He has invited you, so to speak, to sit in the first places at His table. You are permitted to eat this Bread of Heaven more often than other people; it is therefore meet that since you are specially privileged in this respect, you should do your utmost to attain a special purity of soul.

2d. Consider that our Lord washed His disciples' feet with the object of teaching us that profound humility ought to be awakened as a preparation for Holy Communion. This pleasing, most attractive virtue is surely the fairest wedding-garment in which we can present ourselves at the heavenly banquet. And forasmuch as it is impossible for us ever to render ourselves really worthy to receive the God of infinite majesty, the most fitting thing that we can do is to approach Him with a keen sense of our unworthiness. How pleasing this is to the Lord may be gathered from the fact that He rewarded by a miracle the humility of the centurion who was the first to utter the words: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof." O my soul, how cold you are, how dry, how poverty-stricken you often are when you go to the Lord's table, and you are unable to prevent this; take courage, only be humble, strike upon your breast as the publican did, and say with all contrition: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," and you will have the right dispositions for receiving our Lord. And in order to awaken these sentiments of humility within your heart, you cannot do better than meditate on the one hand upon the inconceivable sublimity and majesty of God, "at whose beck the pillars of heaven tremble and dread," and on the other upon your own destitution and low estate, your own sinfulness and God's holiness; then assuredly you will in the words of the prodigal son exclaim with feelings of profound humility: "Father, I have sinned against heaven

and before Thee; I am not worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants." Then indeed will the Father clasp in fond affection to His breast the son who thus humbles himself.

3d. Consider that by this washing of feet our Lord teaches us with what fervent love we ought to approach Holy Communion. Endeavor to realize whilst you meditate on this subject what is this charity our Lord displays in washing His disciples' feet. He performs this service of love for disciples who will abandon Him before the day is ended, who will even deny Him, nay, He actually washes the feet of the traitor who will betray Him. The charity of Jesus knows no limits; susceptibility and resentment are alike alien to it. Now if whilst meditating thus you perceive what should be your feelings, the dispositions of your heart when you go to Communion, you will form some idea of the guilt of those who partake of this feast of charity, all the while entertaining in their heart aversion, rancor, or even hatred towards one of their Brethren or Sisters. Call to mind before receiving Holy Communion this great charity of our Lord in order that your cold, resentful heart may be melted, kindled in the warmth of the sun of charity, the boundless charity of Jesus. Consider this saying of St. Chrysostom: "What shepherd is there who feeds his flock with his own blood? A shepherd, do I say? There are many mothers so devoid of affection for their offspring that when their children are born, they resign them to the care of nurses. The Saviour would not do this, He nourishes us with His own most precious blood." O Love of God, shall I receive Thee without loving Thee in return? Never, nevermore.

FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS
CHRISTI, THE FEAST OF THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS.

ON THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

To-day, when we recall to mind in an especial manner the death of Christ, picture to yourself the moment when our Lord had just breathed His last upon the cross and one of the soldiers, raising his spear, thrust it into His side. Thus was that heart pierced whose every pulsation was one of love for man; that heart which loved us more than we ever else were loved; that heart which was broken solely to effect our reconciliation with God. Keep the image of this pierced heart before your eyes whilst you make your meditation.

1st. Consider the fearful agony our Lord endured while hanging on the cross. What wondrous charity animated this divine heart! To die when perfectly innocent, to die in the most cruel torture that can be imagined, to die for one's enemies, is not this incomprehensible charity? But now the heart of Jesus beats more and more feebly; at length it ceases altogether; one last throb and it breaks in death. Think, my soul, of the first pulsation of that heart at Nazareth; realize as far as you can what from that moment to this that heart has endured for you, felt for you, suffered for you. Now it is at rest; all is over. But the charity of that heart is not exhausted. Jesus willed to bestow upon you all that was His: Whilst He hung upon the cross He gave His Mother to you; when the pallor of death overspread His features He gave His life for you; now after death He gives you His heart, the heart that was riven by His desire, that you might find therein a place of repose.

2d. Consider that the Evangelist does not say that one of the soldiers pierced our Lord's side, but that with a spear he opened His side. (St. John xix. 34.) What is the reason of this? It was our Lord's will that a secure

place of refuge should be opened for you, none other than His sacred heart, in which you might abide continually, as did a certain holy count, of whom we read that when absent from home he wrote to his wife: "I am quite well in health. If perchance thou desirest to see me, seek me in the sacred wound of my Saviour's side, for there is my dwelling, there thou wilt find me." Ponder this attentively. There is an ancient fable which asserts that if one should eat the heart of a snake he can thenceforth handle snakes with impunity, and he is proof against the poison of their fangs. Now Christ is the mystic serpent, for He Himself declares: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of man be lifted up." (St. John iii. 14.) Whoso therefore spiritually feeds upon the heart of the divine serpent, that is to say, is united to it in the closest union by entering in spirit into the wound of that sacred heart, cleft by the soldier's spear, is safe against the venom of the infernal serpent and need fear no more that its bite will prove hurtful to him. Ask yourself, my soul, whether you have hitherto made use of that place of refuge, whether you have profited by our Lord's charity in offering to you His heart, or whether you have failed as yet to seek that sure asylum.

3d. Consider that from the wounded heart of Jesus there flows an ineffable sweetness that makes all bitter things sweet. Truly, however hard, however wretched your life on earth may be, if you do but look upon the heart of Jesus, opened for you, if you see the last drop of His blood mingled with water flow from that heart, flow from it for your sake, nothing will any longer seem arduous, nothing will seem too hard for you to bear. It was so with a certain monk who all at once found the yoke of the Rule so intolerable that he hesitated whether he had not better leave the Order. Whilst he was in this state of uncertainty Christ appeared to him and showed him the wound in His sacred side, saying: "Whatever appears to thee too heavy to be borne, too austere to be endured, lay it within My bleeding side and it will become sweet and attractive to thee." The monk did as he was desired,

and persevered in his vocation. In like manner immerse yourself, my soul, this day and whenever your state of life or the Rule of your Order appears a burden beyond your power to sustain, in this source of grace, this fount of consolation and sweetness, and you will rise up endued with new courage, with fresh strength, and sing with joy and thankfulness the words:

“ O Jesu, Victim blest,
 What else but love divine
Could Thee constrain to open thus
 That sacred heart of Thine?
Hide me in that dear heart,
 For thither would I fly;
There seek Thy grace in life, in death,
 Thine immortality.”

SATURDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE POWER OF LOVE IN THE HEART OF JESUS.

To-day, in commencing your meditation, let your thoughts dwell for a few moments on the three hours' agony of our Lord upon the cross. It is impossible for you to contemplate it without deep emotion, without feelings of contrition, of gratitude, of love. Yet at the time hundreds stood by callous and indifferent, unmoved by the awful sufferings of which they were eye-witnesses on Calvary. Thus even the pains our Lord endured at His crucifixion failed to melt those stony hearts; the crown of thorns, the transfixed hands and feet produced no impression on them. But all was changed when once the heart of Jesus was opened.

1st. Consider that just as the greater the altitude the sun attains in the sky the more power its rays have to warm the face of the earth, so it was with the Sun of justice, our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst He walked on the earth in lowliness and abjection, the hearts of many sinners were,

it is true, warmed and illuminated by the sunshine of His grace, but the great majority remained obdurate. But when that heavenly Sun ascended higher, when from the elevation of the cross He sent the rays of divine charity, issuing from His wounded side, into the hearts of men, they were warmed and melted. Not the centurion alone, but all the bystanders struck their breasts in contrition, and a far greater number of Jews at that time believed on Christ than until then His signs and miracles had been effectual to convince. The Gentiles also were converted to the faith less by the power of His miracles than by the potency of the charity the crucified Redeemer displayed. The blood and water, the last and highest token of love that came from the heart of Jesus, was more efficacious in softening those stony hearts than all the signs and wonders that had gone before. This fact will not appear so incomprehensible when we consider:

2d. The extraordinary ardor of the charity that consumed the heart of Jesus. Great heat causes perspiration, it makes a man put on thinner clothing, it produces excessive thirst and accelerates the circulation of the blood in the extremities of the body. Now in like manner the heat of the fire of charity that burnt in the heart of Jesus was so ardent, so intense, that it caused the sweat of blood to exude from His pores, it caused Him to be stripped of His garments, and it was this, still more than His bodily sufferings, which induced a thirst so inexpressibly torturing that He who up to that point had borne the most grievous sufferings with mute, lamb-like endurance, uttered upon the cross that bitter cry: "I thirst!" Moreover the fire of charity in that sacred heart burnt so hotly, that it made the blood flow in streams from His veins, dyeing His body with its crimson tide. Furthermore in the furnace of that glowing charity the heart of Jesus itself was at last broken; it was opened in order that the flames whereby it was inwardly consumed might flare up externally, and kindle our hearts by contact with them. Oh how great was the power of love in that divine heart which thus made a victim of Christ's most holy body!

3d. Yet, my soul, consider that perhaps your heart is even now resisting the power of that love. "Who," we read in the Imitation, "approaching humbly to the fountain of sweetness, does not carry away thence some little sweetness? Or who, standing near a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat?" (Imit. B. iv. ch. 4.) And you, my soul, stand so frequently at this fire, nay more, how often when you receive Holy Communion you lean on the heart of your Redeemer, that heart which glows with charity for you. But when do you give any outward proof that you are inwardly consumed by the fire of divine charity? If it were indeed so with you, you would toil in the sweat of your face in the service of God and the untiring struggle against sin; you would put off the garments of sinful desires, the burdensome apparel of evil habits; you would then experience a thirst for greater perfection, and you would open your heart to your Saviour and listen to His inspirations as a flower unfolds its petals to the sun. Is that the case with you? And if not, why is this? What will you do in future that you may no longer offer any resistance to the all-powerful charity of the divine heart of Jesus?

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE BOUNDLESS LOVE OF JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, TOWARDS SINNERS.

Contemplate to-day the pleasing picture which the Gospel for this Sunday sets before you. Publicans and sinners draw nigh to the Saviour; they approach Him, held back on the one hand by a sense of shame, on the other hand impelled by hopeful love; they approach Him like wandering sheep, returning to the Good Shepherd. Study our Lord attentively in His character of the Good Shepherd, the one in which He Himself presents Himself to us in the Gospel.

1st. Consider how the love of Jesus for sinners is dis-

played in the institution of the seven sacraments. It was not enough for the infinite charity of Jesus for sinners that He spent His whole life in going in search of His lost sheep; it was not enough that by the light of His divine teaching He pointed out to them the right way, that He cleansed them from every stain of sin, washing them in His own most precious blood; that when He ascended up on high, He opened the gates of Heaven that had long been closed against them; no, He must needs do more; He bequeathed to them a precious legacy, a celestial inheritance, a never-failing, ever-flowing fount of grace for sinners in all ages in the seven holy sacraments. He bequeathed to them the source of regeneration, of sanctifying grace in holy Baptism, the strengthening chrism of Confirmation, the Bread of Life in Holy Communion, the medicine for the sick in the Sacrament of Penance, the shield and defence in the last dread conflict in Extreme Unction. Consider, my soul, how in these five sacraments the Good Shepherd has amply provided for all the spiritual necessities of sinful man from the outset to the end of His earthly career. In the other two sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, He furthermore exhibits His love for sinners in a special manner, since by the latter sacrament He sanctions and sanctifies the carnal desires of nature, and directs to a more exalted object the impulses which most frequently lead to sin, to sins of the most degrading character; while by the former of these two sacraments He ennobles sinful man, raising him to a great dignity and conferring on him powers which are denied even to the angels. O boundless love of Jesus! Would it not have been sufficient proof of love to have left us one sacrament, that of baptism, by which we could be born again and redeemed? No, the stream of grace that flows for sinful mortals was to be sevenfold.

2d. Consider how the love of Jesus for sinners is most particularly displayed in the Sacrament of Penance, the “second plank after the shipwreck of the soul.” Suppose that some one saved you from drowning at the risk of his own life, and as soon as he had brought you safely to land,

you wantonly threw yourself back into the rushing stream. Would it not be an act of extraordinary love, showing the great affection your rescuer bore towards you, if he plunged a second time into the water to save you? Now Jesus does not merely rescue you once out of the abyss of perdition by means of holy baptism, He comes a second time to your aid in the Sacrament of Penance; nay, if you were so headstrong and foolish as to cast yourself into the deadly current of sin ten, twenty, even thirty or a hundred times, the Good Shepherd will extend to you a saving hand ten, twenty, thirty or a hundred times in the holy Sacrament of Penance. Meditate to-day on this boundless, unspeakable love for sinners, and ask yourself to what extent do you resemble our Lord in His love for those poor wandering sheep, and in what way do you evince that love?

3d. Consider how much this love for sinners cost your Saviour. Alas! even the first grace which was granted to you in baptism, deliverance from original sin and a share in sanctifying grace, was purchased at a high price. Think how, in order to procure this blessing for you, He came down from Heaven, and for three and thirty years went about the land of Palestine, a Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep of His fold. He goes down into the deep valleys, He traverses the dark glades of the forest, He ascends the mountain heights; the hill country of Judea re-echoes with the voice of the Shepherd, calling to His sheep, the meadows of Palestine are bedewed with His tears, moistened with the sweat of His sacred countenance; He rests not until He has found the stray lamb, and even though for this purpose He must climb the steep and painful road that leads to Calvary and thence descend into the gloomy abyss of death, His love for sinners does not count this too great a sacrifice. You will perhaps imagine that such charity as this must surely be enough. And yet were not the charity of Christ still greater, you and many thousands of mankind would be lost, lost eternally, for how few there are who preserve their baptismal innocence, that grace so dearly purchased; and what would become of you and countless others but for the "second

plank" of salvation, the Sacrament of Penance? O my soul, how often you have already received that sacrament; have you ever thought how boundless is the compassion, how infinite the charity Jesus displays in that sacrament? Have you given thanks for it as you ought?

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CASTING OF THE SELLERS OUT OF THE TEMPLE.

You have already, my soul, in the course of your meditations stood beside the crib of our Lord at Bethlehem and beneath His cross on Calvary; you have witnessed His glorious resurrection, His ascension into Heaven, the mission of the Holy Ghost; finally you have dwelt in thought on the memorial that after He had gone up on high He left behind for us, in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Now let the public ministry of Christ, His teaching and miracles form the subject of your meditations. Accompany Him during the three years in which He journeyed throughout Palestine preaching the Gospel; and to-day first of all betake yourself to the temple at Jerusalem and witness what passes there.

1st. Consider our Lord's zeal for the house of God. Jesus enters the house of His Father, the temple of God, the sanctuary of Israel. What meets His eye there? The forecourt is turned into a market-place; oxen and sheep, doves and lambs desecrate by their presence a spot consecrated to the service of God; the money-changers' gold, chinking on their tables, disturbs the devotion of the worshippers; the shrill cries of buyers and sellers break the solemn silence that ought to prevail when God Himself is near. But now He is coming who declares: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up," the Man, Christ Jesus.

Behold Him, my soul, standing there in more than human majesty and authority; in His hand He wields a scourge; His voice, uplifted in stern rebuke, is heard above

the clamor of the bargaining; He overthrows the tables of the covetous money-changers and before long His Father's house is cleared and cleansed. Thus Jesus manifests Himself at the very outset of His public career as Master in the house that is His own and His Father's. His noble anger terrifies the cowardly traders; they give way before Him; no one dares to withstand Him. Pause, my soul, and admire on the one hand the mysterious, supernatural power our Lord exercised when He—one against many—stood forth to reprimand and chastise; and on the other hand His zeal for the house of God; ask yourself whether you are actuated by a like zeal for God's glory, and whether it may not be that your demeanor in the temple of God, your inattention, the worldly thoughts and material interests that occupy your mind in choir, in the church, nay, that you even allow to accompany you when you go up to the altar, have not long since provoked the wrath of the Most High, called for His just chastisements.

2d. Consider that the punishment of those who profaned the temple was in reality a reproof to the high priests and guardians of the temple, whose duty it was to see that the house of God was kept holy; they felt it to be a reflection upon them, and that is why they asked: "What sign dost Thou show unto us, seeing Thou dost these things?" (St. John ii. 18.) Let this teach you two things, my soul. First that the administrator of a church, a house, the president of an association, has more duties and consequently greater responsibilities than his subordinates. If therefore you occupy a position of authority, see to it lest, while in your private life there is nothing displeasing to God, or even much that is pleasing in His sight, at the same time you may err in your public capacity through negligence, indifference, human respect, or the desire to make yourself popular, and thus incur the divine anger and provoke His retributive justice. But if you are a subject, thank God for it, congratulate yourself on being exempt from such responsibility, and do not in your ambitious heart envy your Superior the position he

fills. The second lesson we may learn is this: consider that although our Lord's censure fell indirectly upon the chief priests, yet He did not leave the cleansing of the temple to be effected by the instrumentality of His disciples, but accomplished it Himself. By this He intends to teach us that the administration of punishment belongs to God as their actual Judge or to their Superior as His representative, but not to those who are in a subordinate position. Beware then how you sit in judgment on your superiors, how you criticise and condemn their words and actions. You would do better far to leave all in humility and patience to God, who is the supreme Judge; then you will not only be at peace yourself, but you will leave others in peace.

3d. Consider what became of all the crowd of sacrificial victims, of the sheep, the doves, and of the piles of gold on the money-changers' tables after our Lord had purified the temple of their presence. Nothing was left, save the little cords which He had formed into a scourge. Here, my soul, you see the end of all that is wrongfully possessed, of all sinful pleasures. They are all evanescent; their ultimate lot is to be destroyed and swept away, and nothing remains but the punitive scourge, the scourge fashioned out of the cords of our own sins, whereby the soul was held captive in life. By it she will be chastised after death to all eternity. Wherefore, my soul, do not wait until the Lord comes in judgment to take vengeance in His wrath and purify you who are a temple of the Holy Ghost; undertake that cleansing yourself, begin this very day; drive out the brute beasts, your unruly passions; chase away the doves, those idle, vain thoughts and desires; overthrow the tables of the money-changers, covetousness and attachment to earthly goods. For unless you yourself purify that temple, the Lord will come as a thief in the night, "whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor." (St. Matt. iii. 12.)

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE NOCTURNAL VISIT PAID BY NICODEMUS TO JESUS.

Fix your thoughts on the singular interview that took place by night between our Lord and one of the chief of the Pharisees, Nicodemus. See how the Good Shepherd, to whom day and night are alike, foregoes His sleep, as once He neglected to take His midday meal at Jacob's well, for the sake of saving one erring soul; see how under the dim light of a lamp He kindles the bright, clear flame of faith in Nicodemus' benighted soul. Keep this touching picture before your eyes while you make your meditation.

1st. Nicodemus, the doctor and teacher of theology in the schools of the temple, now may be seen sitting as a scholar at the feet of the divine Teacher. The dignity of our Lord's person and the testimony of His miracles have attracted this learned rabbi to the Saviour of mankind. He comes with all the importance his position gives him to hold intercourse with our Lord, but he comes by night, he comes secretly for fear of his colleagues. How great is the power exercised by human respect! It even compels a man like Nicodemus to seek the way of salvation secretly, under cover of night. The dread of being despised, ridiculed by his colleagues and his scholars, of being perhaps subjected to persecution, if he were publicly to confess himself to be a disciple of the Teacher from Nazareth, dominated at that time the erudite Scribe, who, at a subsequent period, came forward openly when the body of Christ was taken down from the cross. How many disciples like Nicodemus there are among the Christians of our own day! They have a good will, they desire to be followers of our Lord, but at the same time they are full of anxiety and solicitude not to displease the children of this world, to give offence to no one, to stand well with all men. Beware of indulging this foolish and

fatal fear of man, and lay to heart the admonition of Thomas à Kempis: "Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man? To-day he is and to-morrow he appears no more. Fear God, and thou shalt not tremble at the terrors of men." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 36.)

2d. Consider that although our Lord perceived this imperfection in Nicodemus, yet He did not blame it severely, He did not repel this neophyte whose faith was still weak by reproving him harshly. This same divine Lord who but a little while before was seen to act with such rigor, such merciless rigor towards the desecrators of the temple, now shows Himself to be the One of whom it was said: "The bruised reed He shall not break and smoking flax He shall not extinguish." He knows when to be stern and when lenient; He knows the right time and the right place to administer chastisement or show indulgence. It was owing to His wise forbearance with Nicodemus' weakness that this timid disciple conducted himself with such intrepid courage when Christ's body was taken from the cross. Learn hence, my soul, learn from our Lord's example to hate, to denounce sin, but to be gentle and indulgent towards the sinner; above all towards those of your Brethren or Sisters who, though well-meaning, are infirm of purpose and apt to waver, and beware especially of falling into a fault to which zealous Priests and Religious are prone, that of not making allowance for the frailty and weakness of others, and blaming them too severely. "We would have others strictly corrected, but will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us and yet we would not be denied what we ask. We will that others should be bound by laws and we suffer not ourselves to be in any wise restrained. Study to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, because thou also hast many things which others must bear withal." (Imit. B. i. ch. 16.)

3d. Consider the first and most essential condition of salvation which our Lord made known to this neophyte, in these words: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he can-

not enter into the kingdom of God." (St. John iii. 5.) This regeneration to the new, the blissful life in God and with God takes place in holy baptism. O happy Nicodemus, who learnt from the Saviour's own lips this consoling, this saving truth, to whom alone of all the Jews He pointed this sure way of salvation. But happier far are you, my soul, for our blessed Lord has not only taught you what this new birth is, but has granted you to be born again. Ponder well this benefit, vouchsafed to you in preference to thousands, millions of your fellow-men. Journey in spirit over the whole of this globe. How many millions you will see in Asia and in Africa, in America and all the islands of the South who day by day pass into eternity without having received the grace of regeneration; nay, how many children daily depart out of this mortal life without having been baptized! You have been made a partaker of this grace, but woe betide you if you lose it by your own fault, if you wilfully abuse it. Should you do so, think what vast numbers will rise up against you in the judgment and accuse you in the words our Lord once uttered: "Wo to thee Corozain, wo to thee Bethsaida, for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes." (St. Matt. xi. 21, 22.)

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONSOLATORY TEACHING WHICH OUR LORD IMPARTED TO NICODEMUS.

Think how destitute Nicodemus was of the science of salvation when he went to our Lord. He knew nothing about a new birth, he had not a right conception of the work of redemption, he had no idea of the goodness and kindness of God towards men that had already appeared in Christ Jesus. He, the much-respected doctor of Israel, now sits as an ignorant scholar at the feet of the new, the

wonderful Teacher, come down from Heaven; listen to the comforting doctrines he hears from the lips of the divine Master.

1st. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up." (St. John iii. 14.) Our Lord reminds the Scribe, the doctor of Israel, well versed in the Scriptures, of the familiar story of the brazen serpent which Moses set up in the desert, in order that all who were bitten might look upon it and be healed; He explains to him the meaning of this Old Testament type; He discloses to him the consoling doctrine of the sacrifice upon the cross. Observe, my soul, that he who first of all his compatriots is made acquainted with the mystery of the cross, is the very one who at a later date will take the Saviour of mankind down from the cross. Fortunate Nicodemus! But if Nicodemus is fortunate, you, my soul, are equally so. Consider how infinite are the blessings contained in the mystery of the cross, which our Lord revealed to you as He did to Nicodemus. The Israelites who were bitten, on looking upon the serpent raised on high in the desert were healed of their wounds; and you, if in faith you look up to the cross of Calvary, meditating upon the solemn and sacred mystery of that cross, will find solace in suffering, confidence in danger, strength in conflict, remission of sin, succor at the hour of death. Wherefore give thanks to God to-day for having initiated you, as He did Nicodemus, in the consoling doctrine of the cross.

2d. Speaking to Nicodemus, our Lord went on to say: "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son that whosoever believed in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life." (v. 16.) After having made known to him the fundamental mystery, the centre and mainspring of the scheme of redemption—the death upon the cross—He proceeds to reveal to him the reason why the Son of man shall be lifted up, the object for which He will suffer and die. The love of God for man is the cause, the salvation of man the object in view. For the first time our Lord permits Nicodemus—permits him alone of all the other

Jews, before all the other Jews, even before His own chosen apostles, to gaze into the unfathomable, mysterious abyss of divine charity, a charity which makes the greatest of all sacrifices, that of His own, His only-begotten Son, and which has no other aim but the rescue, the eternal happiness of ungrateful, rebellious man. How deeply the heart of the Jewish Scribe must have been touched, how it must have overflowed with thankfulness and love, when he heard truths of so comforting a nature from the lips of Jesus. Imagine yourself, my soul, in Nicodemus' place, imagine that to you our Lord reveals this mystery, and then consider this truth of infinite depth, abounding in consolation: God the Father gave His only Son out of love for me and for my salvation.

3d. "God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him." (v. 17.) This is the third consoling truth which our Lord makes known to Nicodemus. In contradiction to the opinion entertained by the Pharisees, and which consequently Nicodemus himself had till then held, our Lord declares that He has not come to judge the world and execute vengeance, but to call all men to His grace and bring them to salvation. If in the first point we have seen how our Lord revealed to Nicodemus, as He has revealed to us, the mystery of the cross, and in the second point how He declared the cause and the object of it, He now discloses the boundless extent, the comprehensiveness of the blessings accruing from the sacrifice of the cross, the universality, the world-wide application of the work of redemption. The whole world, all mankind that is, Jews and Gentiles are to be saved, the Lord declares, since for all men He is sent. What solace these words contain! No one is excluded from the gift of grace. But observe he who would receive that gift must believe; "he that believeth on Him is not judged," our Lord says. Lay this thought to heart. Infinite comfort is to be derived from the three truths imparted to Nicodemus, that of the death of the divine Victim upon the cross, the reason and object of that sacrifice, and the all-embracing nature of the salvation it

effects. But whether you really share in the consolation these blessings bestow rests with you, since God gives you free-will. In spite of all that is done for you, you may yet be lost, if you "love darkness rather than the light." (v. 19.)

Ask yourself, my soul, if at this moment death seized you in his inexorable clutches, of what avail would the blessed truths which our Lord revealed to Nicodemus be to you? According to the answer of your conscience form fresh resolutions to-day.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S MEETING WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB'S WELL.

In a smiling valley between Mount Garizim and Hebal Jacob's well is situated, on which our Lord may now be seen sitting. Wearied with His journey, He is taking a brief rest in the heat of the day. But no, even now He does not rest. His divine soul, kindled with charity towards sinners, glowing more hotly than the rays of the midday sun, thirsts for yet more labor, thirsts for the salvation of a poor, sinful Samaritan woman.

1st. Whilst Jesus is sitting beside the well, His wandering glances rest upon Samaria, the city which in its fatal blindness severed itself from the temple at Jerusalem, the place where God was worshipped in truth. What is our Lord waiting for, what is He expecting? The return of the disciples, who were gone into the city to buy meats? Oh no; He entertains desires of a very different nature; the hunger He experiences is of another order. Fiercely as the midday sun burns, His yearning for the salvation of souls is no less ardent; although His body is exhausted with fatigue, His soul cannot, will not rest until He has found another lost sheep, until He has given it to drink not of the material water out of the well, but of living

water, springing up into life everlasting. It is a scene that must awaken emotion in every spectator. The Samaritan, suspecting nothing, draws near to the well, approaches the Stranger, a Jew, who is sitting there; she knows not that He is the Good Shepherd, that He has come to rescue her from eternal perdition. St. Augustine, speaking of the Saviour when He was sitting by the well, weary in body but active in spirit, consumed with zeal for souls, says: "See a hen with a brood of chickens, how worn and thin she is; her wings droop, her feathers are ruffled; her condition is typical of that of our Lord, when tired out by His labors, faint and exhausted, He sat down to rest on Jacob's well. As the hen, engrossed with concern for the welfare of her little ones, forgets herself, forgets her own needs, so our Lord thinks not of taking food and drink, but thinks only of the soul that He would save." Contemplate this Good Shepherd and let the sight of Him rekindle your zeal for souls. There is nothing more pleasing to God than zeal for His glory and for the salvation of souls. St. Chrysostom asserts that no service is more acceptable to Him, and St. Gregory says that the most high God regards zeal for souls with more favor than any oblation we can offer Him. And it is recorded of a saintly monk of the Franciscan Order, who had labored for many long years for the conversion of the Indians, that on his retiring to a monastery in Spain, there to lead a life of strict seclusion, whenever he prayed before the crucifix, he fancied he heard Jesus calling to him in accents of tender, loving reproach, saying: "Why hast thou left Me hanging on the cross and sought for thyself rest and solitude?" What would our Lord say to you, my soul, in regard to this?

2d. Consider with what kindness, charity and condescension our Lord received the Samaritan woman, who was a sinner, a grievous sinner. He strives to attract the wandering sheep to Himself with the voice of kindness, not of stern, that is too stern, rebuke, lest that should only scare it, and frighten it away. In the first point our Lord was set before you as a model of zeal for souls, of that zeal

which every Christian ought to possess, and ought to exercise according to his state in life, by exhortation, the cure of souls, or prayer and penance for others. Now you are called upon to study His example and thence learn what the character of that zeal ought to be. "I bear them witness," says the Apostle, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom. x. 2.) Right zeal is always combined with charity and mercy and pre-eminently with patient forbearance. How many are zealous preachers of penance, but imitators of Jonas, who was angry because the lightning from heaven did not follow upon his preaching and destroy the city of Ninive! How many are rigorous denouncers of evil, keen champions of justice, of the law of God, of the Rule of their Order, but all the while the spirit that animates them is the same as that which led the apostles to ask: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?" (St. Luke ix. 54.) St. Augustine aptly remarks on this subject: "Consider how hotly Moses' anger was kindled at the sight of the people's transgression, so that he broke the tables of the law, written with the finger of God, which had been delivered to him with great solemnity after he had fasted forty days and forty nights. But however great his wrath may have been, he immediately returned to God, beseeching Him either to forgive the Israelites that trespass, or if not, to strike him out of the book of life. The zeal that animates the servants of God should be of this nature, causing them on the one hand to be deeply concerned on account of the offence against God, and on the other hand to feel such deep compassion for the sinner that they forthwith interpose on his behalf as mediators with God." You compassionate those who are mentally afflicted, or dangerously sick, but the sinner is more deserving of pity than they are; remember this, and your zeal for souls will resemble that of our Lord at Jacob's well, it will be tempered with charity.

3d. Consider that our Lord asks the Samaritan woman to give Him to drink, with the purpose of acquainting her with the spiritual thirst He felt for the salvation of her

soul. It is as if He would say: Woman, I have in store for thee a living water, rich in blessings, but before I can give it thee, thou must give Me water, the water of thy tears, tears of contrition and repentance for thy sins. How often has our Lord in His sacred thirst for souls, required of you that water of compunction without which He cannot forgive you or give you to drink of His living water? How often in the season of meditation, during your spiritual reading, when listening to a sermon, on the occasion of some startling event, has this cry rung in your ears: "Give Me to drink!" (St. John iv. 7.) Quench My thirst for your salvation by following My divine inspirations. Have you obeyed that voice as readily, as promptly as the Samaritan woman did? To-day at least listen to that call, and if your meditation on the first point has inspired you with true zeal for souls, see that you display that zeal in the first place in regard to your own soul. If you are really concerned for its welfare, you will also be concerned for the welfare of others; but he who neglects his own soul will be of but little use to the souls of others. "For," as St. Gregory says, "he cannot kindle others who does not burn himself;" and a master of the spiritual life very justly remarks: "A man must be himself inflamed with the love of God in order to inflame the hearts of others with that same love."

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

Whilst our Lord was engaged in earnest conversation with the woman of Samaria, the disciples came up, and stood still with astonishment, wondering to see their Master talking in an animated manner with a woman, and that woman a Samaritan. But they would have had yet more reason to be surprised, had they been acquainted with

the subject of that conversation, had they known that the deep, mysterious truths of salvation formed its theme. Imagine yourself standing with the disciples listening to the sacred words that Jesus speaks.

1st. "If thou didst know the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, etc." (St. John iv. 10.) Thus our Lord speaks to the woman, in order to make her aware from the first of the exalted dignity of His person, and that consequently it was no slight favor, but a great gift from God, that He should converse with her; He, the Creator, with one of His creatures; He, the Son of God, with a fallen daughter of Eve; He, the Judge of all men, with a woman of evil life. O wondrous mercy, infinite condescension of our God! Alas! you will perhaps exclaim with a sigh of envy, if such a privilege were to come in my way, how highly I should prize it! Reflect, O reader, before you utter those words, reflect how often a like privilege is granted to you, and how little you care about it. How often in confession, in Holy Communion you have, like the Samaritan woman, been admitted to sweet converse with Jesus, yet you have scarcely heard, certainly not heeded the words He spoke to you. What lamentable blindness! The devil comes—your bitterest adversary—he accosts you, he tempts you and you listen to him with pleasure and obey him with docility, yet as soon as God, your best friend, speaks to you, you turn a deaf ear to His voice.

2d. Jesus continues: "If thou didst know the gift of God, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The living water here spoken of is sanctifying grace; but alas! how many are strangers to that gift of God! how many know not how great it is! how many fail to appreciate its inestimable worth! Hence they so heedlessly imperil this grace of God, they are so indifferent as to the actual loss of it. Ponder this to-day, my soul, and endeavor to conceive a right idea of the magnitude of this divine gift, sanctifying grace. St. Peter says of it that it makes man a partaker of the divine nature; St. John asserts that it makes

us children of God; St. Paul declares that it makes us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. In order to create a countless multitude of worlds, only one word from the mouth of God was needed, but in order to obtain for us this gift of God, sanctifying grace, in order to impart a supernatural, celestial life to the soul, it was necessary that God should become man and suffer death upon the cross. The whole firmament of heaven, with its myriads of shining orbs, is of far less value in God's sight than one individual soul, embellished with sanctifying grace. "If thou didst know the gift of God," how would it be possible for you thus heedlessly to cast this pearl before swine!

3d. Furthermore our Lord says: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever." (v. 13.) By the water first mentioned the pleasures of time and sense are meant, the enjoyment of earthly wealth and earthly honors. That water can never quench the thirst of the soul; it rather intensifies it, as the salt water of the sea does natural thirst. Hear what Solomon, the Wise Man, says: "I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem; whatsoever my eyes desired I refused them not; I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and after all, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun." (Eccles. ii. 9, 11.) The votaries of the world, those who are engrossed in the pursuit of worldly delights, lead a life of incessant movement and unrest, nor after death do they find repose. Whoso on the contrary drinks of the water that Jesus will give him, who finds contentment and satisfaction in His grace, His riches, His joys, he will not thirst for ever; he will be at peace here, and enjoy eternal repose hereafter. Only ask yourself, my soul, when you feel tranquil, when you feel contented and happy, and when you are restless, when you are athirst, and you will find that your own experience will confirm the truth of what we read in the Imitation: "When Jesus is with us, all is well and nothing seems difficult; but

when Jesus is not with us, everything is hard. Thou alone, O God, canst give tranquillity of heart, great peace, and festive joy." (B. ii. ch. 8.)

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

Endeavor to realize the deplorable spiritual state of Photina, (for such, tradition tells us, was the name of the Samaritan woman), at the time of her interview with our Lord. Held captive in the bonds of an illicit union, burdened with the weight of grievous sins, she would have gone irretrievably on the way of everlasting perdition had not the voice of the Good Shepherd at the opportune moment called her back from the yawning abyss; had she not, when she went to Jacob's well, found One sitting there whose divine heart, as St. Augustine says, thirsted to bestow on her the gift of faith, thirsted for the salvation of a fallen woman, for whom He was to shed His precious blood. Hear what our Lord says to the sinner:

1st. "Go call thy husband." (St. John iv. 16.) These words were the initial cause of the conversion of the unhappy sinner; by them our Lord gave her an occasion calculated to reveal to the listener His supernatural power of reading the heart, as well as to awaken her conscience and arouse within her the desire of salvation. For God only grants His grace to those who desire it, and the grace of remission of sin pre-eminently is not given until the sinner acknowledges his misdeeds and confesses them with contrition of heart. After the Samaritan woman, touched by our Lord's loving rebuke, had come to a knowledge of her sin and confessed her sin, then, and then only, was forgiveness extended to her. If you, my soul, are desirous to obtain the pardon of your transgressions, acknowledge and confess them, as the woman did at Jacob's well.

2d. Consider this: "The woman left her water-pot and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not He the Christ?" (v. 28, 29.) These words show us how thorough was the conversion of the woman. She goes back empty-handed, leaving her water-pot standing by the well, thereby signifying that she had completely abandoned the water-pot of evil concupiscences hitherto indulged, which had never availed to quench her thirst, and chose from thenceforth to drink instead of the water of salvation, which quenches the thirst for evermore. How many sinners are converted, but only apparently; they do not return from receiving the Sacrament of Penance empty-handed, but carry with them the water-pot of their old habits of sin, which they will not forsake, the occasions which have already caused them to fall, and which they will not avoid. Ask yourself whether you are one of these superficial converts. If not, if you have completely abandoned your evil ways, you may yet learn something from the Samaritan woman. Observe that she, herself called by Jesus, now in her turn calls others to Him, and does so with humility and modesty, for she owns that the revelation to her of her own sins has led her to the faith. If, O Christian, you are truly reformed, if the reformation of your life has given as much edification to others as your former manner of life gave scandal, do not rest content with this; strive, as did the woman in question, to convert others by means of warning and exhortation, by prayer and works of penance done on their behalf. But see that you do this in a humble and modest manner, recognizing the fact that you were yourself formerly, before divine grace touched your heart, a miserable sinner, remembering that you have every reason to say with St. Augustine: "You reproach me with my old sins; well, I condemn them even more severely than you do. I am the first to blame that which you abhor. The more I am reproached with my former faults and failings, the more I extol the medicine which effected my cure."

3d. Consider that our Lord had the conversion of the

Samaritan woman so much at heart, and rejoiced so much at it, that He neglected to partake of the food which the disciples brought to Him. But what gave Him so much pleasure was not the self-complacent thought that He, He individually, had succeeded in saving a soul from eternal death; no, He rather rejoiced in the consciousness, the sublime consciousness of having done the will of His heavenly Father and perfected His work. (v. 34.) That is His meat and His drink. What a lesson this is for you! You are perhaps most zealous in performing the duties that the cure of souls imposes on you; you forget your own meat and drink when in the confessional or the pulpit; you practise many mortifications for the conversion of sinners; yet ask yourself, ask yourself seriously, is the motive that actuates you the only really meritorious, the only really admirable one, the desire to accomplish the will of God, to promote the extension of His kingdom, to labor for the increase of His glory? Or after all, is the chief mainspring of your zeal and your gladness in saving souls the self-complacent consciousness, the proud feeling: that is all my doing. You will say that it is not so; but if that be the case, why do you at once feel a certain jealousy when others accomplish more than you do? Why are you downcast if an opportunity to work for the spiritual welfare of your neighbor is given to others and not to you? Why do you look more to the number of your hearers, of your penitents, why do you think more of the praises you earn than the compunction you awaken in their hearts, of the progress they make in virtue? Examine yourself on this point.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

Contemplate the picture which the Gospel for this day places before your eyes. In the midst of lovely scenery lies the lake of Genesareth. The shores of the fair and smiling lake are clothed with beautiful, tender verdure;

the air is laden with the delicious fragrance emitted by the flowers and aromatic herbs of field and meadow; it resounds with the joyous matutinal song of countless feathered songsters; the golden rays of the sun, rising in the east, are reflected a thousandfold in rainbow tints in the sparkling drops of dew. What a charming landscape! Yet while all around in nature is cheerful and pleasing, the disciples appear sad and out of spirits. What is the reason of this? Listen and you will know.

1st. "We have labored all the night and have taken nothing." (St. Luke v. 5.) In these words St. Peter gives the answer to your inquiry. The livelong night they have been laboring, and what is the result of their toil? Their nets were full of slime, mud and stones, they were bedraggled and torn, but there was not one single fish in them. What a miserable night they have spent! How fruitless was their labor! Here, my soul, you have an image of the condition of the sinner, the sinner who is in a state of mortal sin. He sails on the sea of this life amid the shades of night, the darkness of the night that shrouds his soul; day by day he casts out the net, his daily toil and work; he may take great pains, he may perhaps be constantly active, allowing himself no respite, no rest—and with what result? Alas! he is compelled to say with St. Peter: "I have labored throughout the whole night of my mortal life and have taken nothing, absolutely nothing of any merit for life everlasting." Yet there is something in the sinner's net. Not, however, the fish of his good works and meritorious actions, only the mud and refuse of sin, the stones of an oppressed conscience. For even his good works are dead as regards eternity, they are entirely without merit. Have compassion, my soul, on those unhappy sinners who labor throughout the whole long night of their earthly existence, who are obliged to work hard as laborers, servants, artisans, and who yet take nothing, because they are in mortal sin. Pray for them, labor for their conversion; and if you are yourself in a like case, if you are spending yourself in such fruitless labor, have compassion on your

own soul in the first place, and spare no effort to escape this very day out of that fatal darkness.

2d. Consider how abundant a draught of fishes the disciples took after Jesus had entered into the boat and the nets had been let down at His command. The unblest night was then over; with Christ the light of day appears with all its attendant blessings. If Christ is in your boat, if you are united to Him, if you are in a state of grace, then as often as you let down your net at His word, that is to say, with a good intention, you will take an abundant draught, for all your actions, however trivial they may be, however unimportant, nay, even unworthy of mention, are each and all fishes, good fishes; that is, they are of merit for eternal life. Thus every day of your life will be as well filled as were the nets of the disciples, because all that you do, your every act, even eating, sleeping, recreation, is done for God, if your intention is rightly directed. "Full days shall be found in them" (Ps. lxxii. 10) says the Psalmist, speaking of the just; but alas! perhaps your days are empty and void. Bewail your past negligence and henceforth never omit by the act of good intention that you make every morning, by the work you accomplish in a state of grace, to draw in every day a plentiful draught of fishes.

3d. Consider the higher, the mystic meaning of the miraculous draught of fishes. Observe that the vocation of the apostles to the actual work of the apostolate followed immediately upon it. Not until this miracle had taken place did they follow our Lord constantly. Thus, according to the explanation St. Augustine gives of this passage, it was intended that the men who were called to the apostolate should see in the miracle that was the reward of their exertions, a type of what would be the nature of the work before them, and what would be its fruit. The apostles, by casting the net of their sacred ministry far and wide in the ocean of the different nations peopling the world, were to gather together the various races of mankind, the good and the bad into one visible Church. Through the number and diversity of the in-

dividuals thus united in one body, temptations and dangers could not fail to arise, threatening to rend the unity of the Church by schism and heresy. But the Church, protected by her divine Head, cannot be rent asunder. By means of united effort and the fraternal aid of the bishops and of all who are in any wise called to assist in the work of evangelization (symbolized by the disciples in the other ships who hastened to help their partners) the Church brings the elect in safety to their goal, she lands them on the shores of the eternal country. Thus it will be seen that every single point of the miracle proposed for our consideration to-day is typical of the Church of Christ. Ponder it well, my soul, and in conclusion observe this one thing more: Every day God's fisherman, Death, lets down his net into the ocean of humanity. Sooner or later you will be taken in this net, and when the angels on the shore of the other world separate the good from the bad, will they—supposing that you are taken in your present state—choose you out with the good to be served on the heavenly table, or will they cast you forth as being bad and useless?

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE HEALING OF THE RULER'S SON.

Two days after our Lord had converted the Samaritan woman, He went on further into Galilee; and behold, when He had reached Cana there came to Him a certain ruler, entreating Him with all the earnestness that paternal affection and paternal anxiety could inspire on behalf of his dearly loved son, who was sick unto death. Keep this touching scene before your eyes whilst you meditate to-day.

1st. The Evangelist simply tells us: "There was a certain ruler, whose son was sick at Capharnaum." (St. John iv. 46.) By this son the soul of every servant of God, of every true believer, is signified, and this son now is said

to be sick at Capharnaum. The meaning of the word Capharnaum is "city of pleasure," of worldly, sensual pleasure. As soon as the soul betakes herself to that city, as soon as she throws herself into the vortex of gayety, mingles in the tumult of earth's revelry, she falls sick, and is in danger of spiritual death. Have you not, my soul, often had this experience? Even now that you are an inmate of the cloister, do you not still again and yet again long for the Capharnaum of worldly joys, worldly delights; would you not fain go abroad to see the world again, to enjoy it for a little space? But why, as the author of the *Imitation* asks, "why dost thou wish to see what it is not permitted thee to have? The world passeth away and the desire of it. The desires of sense draw thee to walk abroad; but when the hour is past, what dost thou bring back, save a weight upon thy conscience and dissipation of heart? A joyous going abroad often brings forth a mournful return, and a late watch spent merrily makes a sad morning. So all carnal joy enters pleasantly, but in the end it bites and kills." (*Imit. B. i. ch. 20.*) If with the son of the ruler you go down to-day to Capharnaum, to-morrow it will be said of you: "he lies sick at Capharnaum."

2d. Consider the loving, fatherly solicitude of the ruler concerning his sick son. He immediately avails himself of the much-desired proximity of the great Worker of miracles, and hastens without delay to the true, the best Physician. How earnest were his entreaties, and when he perceived that our Lord hesitated to grant the aid he asked for, he was yet more instant in his supplications, imploring Him: "Lord, come down before that my son die." (*iv. 49.*) Hence learn the love, the anxiety you ought to feel for your own soul when it is sick. If it is laid low by corrupt inclinations, by venial sin, by unruly appetites, wait not until the disease grows worse and mortal sin causes its death. Fly at once to the Saviour; cry, clamor for help. If you were to descry a little tongue of flame issuing from the roof of your house, how speedily you would run to fetch water for the purpose of extinguishing

the first sparks, before they blazed up and caused a great conflagration. And if you were to feel the first symptoms of fever, you would immediately take to your bed, so as to check the malady in time, before it got too firm a hold on you. Yet if a dangerous spark of evil concupiscence falls into your soul, if the fever of rebellious passions makes itself felt in your breast, you look on calmly, and remain passive until the spark kindles a fire not easily extinguished, until the feverish attack attains the proportions of a deadly disease. What insensate folly! What cruelty towards your own soul!

3d. Consider that our Lord heals the sick youth without entering the ruler's house, urgently though he implores Him to do so. St. Gregory says our Redeemer refused to go to the son of this man of high position, although He was willing to go to the centurion's servant, in order to show that the saints count that of little value which men hold in high esteem, and do not despise what men think of small account. There is no respect of persons with God. Observe this, and learn of Jesus that in the cure of souls, in works of charity, in all the services you render to your neighbor, only to think of the soul you would benefit, and not of the rank or position of the individual; to be equally solicitous for the salvation of the meanest peasant as for that of the highest nobleman, for, as the Apostle says, before God "there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 28.) How many Priests and Religious err in this respect, forgetting that an immortal soul, of priceless value, lies hid beneath the corduroy suit as well as beneath the silken robe; forgetting that the wrinkled face of the aged crone ought to have no less attraction for them than the pleasing features of a beauteous maiden. "We must not look at the exterior, but at the interior," says St. Bernard, "we ought to pay no more heed to that which concerns the body than we should to a heap of rubbish, a dunghill covered with a coating of snow, or a whitened sepulchre, for after all the body is neither more nor less than that." "Those who labor for the salvation of

souls," says a celebrated Doctor of the Church, "ought not to regard differences of outward form nor even the difference of sex, but in each and all alike to see but one thing, an immortal, imperishable soul." Impress this truth deeply upon your mind; it will preserve you from many a failure, many a fault.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON PERFECT JUSTICE ACCORDING TO OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

Represent to yourself to-day our Lord in His capacity of Teacher; behold Him standing before the people, who were astonished at the wisdom He displayed, and "were in admiration of His doctrine, for He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." (St. Matt. vii. 28, 29.) Imagine yourself to be one of His audience; imagine yourself standing in person in the presence of this divine Master, listening to these words from His sacred lips: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (St. Matt. v. 20.)

1st. Consider that, according to the opinion of St. Chrysostom, by justice our Lord means us to understand virtue in general; perfect justice consists in the concord, the conformity of our every thought and action with the revealed will of God. As the magnet invariably points to the north, so the intention of the just man, in all he thinks or desires, in all he says or does, is always directed to God. God is his end, the will of God his actuating motive. Our evil proclivities seek to divert us from this directing of our intention towards God, hence St. Augustine says: "There alone is perfection (i.e. perfect justice) where concupiscence is no more, where all our senses are so completely subordinated to reason that we resist them even in sleep, the law of God being always present to our mind." Holy

Scripture sketches the image of the just man when it says: "His heart is ready to hope in the Lord, his heart is strengthened, he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies." (Ps. exi. 8.) "His will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night." (Ps. i. 2.) Look into your own heart, examine yourself, and see whether your words and desires, your thoughts and deeds have God for their centre, both in regard to the range they take as well as in the motives that inspire them, the goal towards which they tend, for that alone constitutes perfect justice.

2d. Consider, in contrast to the perfect justice Christ demands of His followers, the justice practised by the Pharisees. They looked only to externals. They were satisfied if their works only had the appearance, bore the stamp of virtue. About what was within, the vivifying essence and soul of their outward actions, they cared but little. They avoided grievous sins that would be seen and known by men, but they committed secret sins without a qualm, and at the same time despised other men, as St. Thomas remarks. Hence the terrible denunciation that our Lord uttered upon them. My soul, make a careful scrutiny of yourself this very day; ascertain whether any of the leaven of the Pharisees still cleaves to you. There are Priests who are described by the people as "excellent workers," who as far as externals go, perform the functions of their sacred calling without a flaw, but whose inner life leaves much to be desired in regard to the spirit of devotion, the aim, the motive of their actions. Again, there are Religious whose lives are entirely correct and in keeping with the Rule, but only according to the letter, and the letter killeth. They observe the rule of silence, but all the time their thoughts are occupied exclusively with earthly things, or they read books that are worldly and only intended to amuse, and thus they are more untrue to the spirit of recollection and reflection while they keep silence, than they would be if they talked. They fast as the Rule requires, but in the choice of meagre aliments and the amount they take they are more fastidious,

less abstemious than people in the world who do not fast. They go to the choir at the regular times, but their ascriptions of praise differ little from the clang of the bell; they obey their Superior, but in a perfunctory manner and with inward reluctance. O my soul, beware lest you become a just man such as those Pharisees, and ponder the words: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." (St. John vi. 64.)

3d. Consider this that our Lord says: "You shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Christ says expressly: "*enter*," not "*you shall not be in Heaven*," or "*be taken up into Heaven*" in order to make it plain to us that we must ourselves walk in the way, pursue the path to Heaven. Thus our life is a pilgrimage, a journey to the kingdom of Heaven. Our entrance into the world is the first step of that journey. To each human being a certain time is appointed within which that journey is to be accomplished. Woe betide the man who stands still, for he is at fault who ceases to advance, not to speak of those who diverge from the way. "We shall not go back," St. Augustine says, "so long as we aspire to the attainment of that which is before us. But as soon as we begin to stand still we are lost, for where there is no progression there is retrogression." "Those who walk in the way of the spiritual life," says St. Gregory, "resemble a man in the midst of a fast-flowing river. If for a single moment he ceases his exertions, and does not struggle against the force of the current, he is in danger of being carried away by the stream." The path we have to pursue is one which is at variance with the inclinations of our sinful nature. Unless we strive with all our might to go forward, we shall be carried away by the force of our passions and swallowed up in the abyss. "Thou hast yet a great way to go" (III. Kings xix. 7), so Holy Scripture declares; therefore do not stand still, but press onward with all your energy, and do not content yourself with the ordinary justice of persons living in the world or of half-hearted Religious, who wear the habit yet have not the spirit of religion, for to them our Lord's words are addressed: "Unless your jus-

tice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE SINFULNESS OF ANGER.

The divine Master, Himself the gentlest and meekest of men, who once said: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (St. Matt xi. 29), impresses most emphatically upon His disciples and the people who are listening attentively to His teaching, the necessity of the virtue of mildness, and exhorts them with solemn earnestness not to give way to anger, and especially to avoid all outbursts of wrath. Take your stand in imagination among our Lord's disciples; listen to and meditate upon the words that fall from His lips.

1st. "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." (St. Matt. v. 22.) Thus we see that anger against one's brother or sister, an unjust, uncharitable, passionate desire that evil may happen to him or her, the desire for revenge, a wish to injure one's neighbor is in itself sinful in the sight of the divine Judge. The soul of him who is angry with his brother has already forfeited the life of grace, has laid herself open to judgment. In speaking of anger we mean passionate, unjust anger. The man who is angry with reason, with good reason, says St. Chrysostom, is not blameworthy, for if no one was ever angry we should have no courts of justice; crime would not be prevented. But he who is angry without a cause is guilty of sin, and justly to be blamed, for what an evil sinful anger is, and how much mischief it occasions! Harsh judgment, desire for revenge, hatred are its offspring. The fire of wrath darkens the understanding and embitters the will. Anger is a temporary madness. How it distorts the human countenance, the features of man, made in God's image! If one

were to hold a mirror before a man who is in a rage he would really be frightened at himself. Now just think of Religious who give way to anger; they are a scourge to their Community, they are like snappish dogs, out of whose way one timidly shrinks. Avoid this sin; struggle against it, if you are naturally inclined to wrath, and remember the words of St. Francis: "Anger and disputes are an obstacle to charity both in oneself and in others."

2d. Consider how our Lord censures outbreaks of anger, saying: "Whoso shall say to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council." (v. 22.) To give vent to one's wrath in abusive language, unworthy of the dignity of man, is a further degree of uncharity, and therefore deserves a more severe judgment, i.e., a worse punishment. According to St. Jerome *Raca* is a Hebrew word signifying empty, void of understanding. "It is not right," says St. Chrysostom, "to call any one empty and contemptible who has the Holy Spirit abiding in him." Mark that carefully; it is not right to despise, to revile, to condemn any one who is the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is fashioned in God's image, who was ransomed by the blood of Christ. Beware then how you despise your neighbor, and still more beware how you express your contempt for him by uncharitable judgments or offensive speeches; and abstain from showing these feelings even when your rigorous judgment is not unjust in itself. For, St. Augustine tells us, there is no sin which our brother commits of which we should not be guilty if the merciful hand of God did not constantly support and restrain us. "That man to-day, I to-morrow" one of the old Fathers of the desert was accustomed to say with a sigh, whenever he heard of any one having committed some sin. And the Apostle aptly warns us: "Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.) One of the Fathers was heard to say: "In regard to three different things I judged one of my brethren unmercifully, and into each of those three sins I have since myself fallen."

3d. Consider how forcibly the Saviour—otherwise so gentle—speaks when He says: "Whosoever shall say

Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." In the language of Holy Scripture "fool" is a term equivalent to God-forsaken, or reprobate. If therefore hatred towards one's fellow man has reached such a pitch that by the use of such invectives as fool, abandoned wretch, one flings at him a curse, a wish for his perdition, the heart of the reviler is so full of hatred that he pronounces his own sentence, he by his own act incurs the penalty of hell fire. You will perhaps say: I am never guilty of that sin, for I condemn no one; but I ask you, is it not tantamount to condemning your neighbor if, actuated by hatred and anger, you take away his good name by your imputations and slanders? For if you did not think him already past hope, you would not ruin his reputation by denouncing him as a reprobate, and you would not apply this term to him if he had not actually committed the shameful deed for which you condemn him. For if you believed that he would amend, or had already amended his conduct, and therefore was not abandoned by God, you would be most careful not to injure his reputation by counting him among the reprobates. "Detract not one another, brethren" (St. James iv. 11), St. James exhorts us, and justly so, for we read that "detractions are hateful to God" (Rom. i. 30), and the Wise Man says: "Hast thou heard a word against thy brother? let it die with thee, thinking that it will not burst thee." (Eccles. xix. 10.)

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE AVOIDANCE OF VAINGLORY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF GOOD WORKS.

Represent to yourself the Pharisees in their anxiety to have all their good works trumpeted forth, to let all men, nay, the whole world, know if they perchance fasted or gave an alms. Now there appears amongst them a

Teacher armed with divine power, who castigates this habit in the severest terms. Fix your gaze on that heavenly Teacher during the meditation to-day.

1st. "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them." (St. Matt. vi. 1.) This is the first precept our Lord enjoins on us, and in it He does not so much forbid us to do good before men, for He Himself says: "Let your light shine before men" (St. Matt. v. 15), but what He forbids us is to do good in order to be seen and praised by men. He intends to warn us against that subtle craving for fame and honor which is so prone to attach itself to our good works, and which robs them of all merit, nay more, renders them evil instead of good. Rodriguez explains this by an excellent illustration. "If a wife were to adorn her person with the view of pleasing another man, not her husband, she would unquestionably be doing her husband a great wrong. Now good works are the ornaments of the soul. If thou dost perform them in order to please any other beside God, you commit a grievous, a crying act of injustice towards Him." This is the reason why the saints warn us so solemnly against allowing this vainglory to accompany our good works; for it is a secret thief who frequently purloins our good works. Or it may be compared, says St. Gregory, to a brigand who joins a traveller under the hypocritical pretence of being desirous for his companionship, and presently, when the other is off his guard, falls on him, robs and murders him. Alas, how often, my soul, you have fallen into the hands of that robber!

2d. Consider that on account of this danger, our Lord exhorts us: "When thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth." (v. 3.) St. Chrysostom thus interprets this passage. By the right hand you are to understand the good work which you perform, by the left the self-complacency of your own heart. If with your right hand you do a good work, your left hand, vain self-satisfaction, seizes upon it and takes it away. Consequently you should not let the left hand know what the right hand does. Much as it is to be desired that men

should be edified by our good works and take example by us, equally is it to be dreaded lest in performing them we should aim at obtaining praise and honor of men. Guard against this carefully; the saints were grieved if they received honor from men on account of what they had done, fearing lest it should be said to them: "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime." (St. Luke xvi. 25.) Do you feel a like fear, are you thus disquieted, my soul? Henceforth never omit every morning at the commencement of the day, as well as before every good work you may do in its course, to direct your intention, saying: "For Thy glory, O my God." Then if some thought of vanity penetrates your mind, you can say: "You come too late, all is already consecrated to God." It is said of St. Bernard that if perchance any self-complacent thought suggested itself to him when he was preaching, he checked it with the words: "Not for thy sake have I begun, and certainly not for thee shall I leave off."

3d. Consider these words: "Thy Father, who sees in secret, will repay thee." (v. 4.) Herein is announced to you the reward, the exceeding great reward which will be your portion if, heedless of human praise, you do good quietly and unobtrusively. Thus you will attain without spiritual injury to yourself the very thing which the Pharisees desired to their own detriment, publicity, to be seen. For, as St. Chrysostom remarks, you will have not merely the angels and archangels to look on and witness your good deeds, but God Himself. And if you want your virtue to be made known, never fear, that too will come to pass, but not now when it would be hurtful for you, but hereafter, to your true glory. Now there would be perhaps ten, twenty, or a hundred persons who would applaud you, and by their laudation deprive you of your recompence, whereas at the day of the universal judgment your virtue will be revealed, the good works you did in secret will be made open, proclaimed before the whole world, before all the angels and saints, and God Himself will speak your praise, and His praise will not work your ruin, but your eternal felicity. Wherefore leave vain things to the

vain, and choose for your motto the words of the prophet: "I will not give my glory to another" (Is. xlii. 8), and repeat those which the Apostle spoke: "To the only God be honor and glory." (I. Tim. i. 17.)

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON COMPASSION WITH OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS.

Our Lord in His character of divine Teacher has of late been the subject of your meditations, and doubtless the doctrine of the divine Master has produced the same effect on you as it did upon the people who listened to Him on earth. His wondrous divine teaching has touched your heart and convinced you that it is not human science but divine Wisdom that speaks in every word His lips utter. Therefore if the multitude heard Him gladly, if they followed and remained with Him for days together, to what a height their love, their admiration for their heavenly Teacher would have risen, if they had known that He who had been nourishing them with the celestial bread of His doctrine would shortly suffer and die for their sakes! To-day, when we commemorate our Lord's death, let your eyes be fixed in sorrowing compassion on the great Instructor, for whom a cross, a crown of thorns is in store; consider how great a claim your suffering Lord has upon your commiseration.

1st. Imagine yourself suddenly brought face to face upon the highroad with a man who had been attacked by robbers, stripped of his clothes, horribly maltreated and finally fastened to a tree with iron nails. Could you look upon the unfortunate individual without feeling the deepest compassion for his terrible sufferings? Your heart would bleed at the sight of his frightful wounds, the cries and lamentations wrung from him by the torture he endured would excite in you the profoundest pity. And

even if he were a total stranger to you, one whom you had never seen before, not even a fellow countryman, nay more, even if he were your enemy, you could not help feeling compassion for him. Now consider that it is not a stranger, not an enemy, it is your God, your Saviour whom you see nailed to the tree of shame, hanging upon the cross. Behold your Lord as He hangs there, covered with wounds from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet, a crown of sharp thorns encircling His brow, His hands and feet pierced with nails; hear Him cry aloud to you, as He piteously turns on you His eyes, bedimmed with blood and tears: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow." (Lam. i. 12.) Yet you pass by and pay no heed to Him. How often you look at the crucifix, how often you recall to mind the Passion of Christ, His death, of which you are reminded in an especial manner every Friday; how often you assist at holy Mass, the memorial of His Passion, or make the way of the cross, and all the while you remain cold, unmoved, indifferent, so that it might be imagined that you were incapable of sentiments of compassion. Why is this?

2d. If you would be touched with heartfelt pity if the individual whom you saw nailed to a tree were a stranger about whom you knew nothing, what words can describe the compassion, the distress, the horror you would feel if in the unhappy victim you recognized your best friend, your greatest benefactor, or even your own father? How bitterly you would grieve and lament! Now behold, it is in very truth your best Friend, your greatest Benefactor, your own Father who is hanging upon the cross for you! When King Saul was dead, David, mourning for him, called to the Jewish maidens: "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you with scarlet in delights, who gave ornaments of gold for your attire." (II. Kings i. 24.) How much the more ought we to weep over the death of the King of Heaven, to mourn for Him who clothed our soul for eternal delights, with the scarlet robe of grace dyed in His own blood, and decked them with

His image surpassing in value the finest gold. Alas! He died for us who adorned the earth with beauteous flowers and fragrant herbs, who filled the firmament with brilliant orbs, who clothed the birds with gay feathers, the fish with shining scales, the beasts with thick, warm fur. And yet we have not a tear to shed for Him! The daughters of Israel wept for Saul—for Jesus His own children do not weep, do not mourn. Can this be possible?

3d. Consider what St. Bernard says: “The earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, the veil of the temple was torn in twain, the sun and moon were darkened, all nature in a word gave signs of sympathy and compassion; shall we alone evince no compassion for Him who suffered solely and wholly for our sake?” In the revelations of St. Bridget it is said that at the time of Christ’s Passion all men then living upon the earth felt an inward sorrow; a mysterious dread came over them which they were at a loss to account for or explain. O my soul, are you harder than the rocks about Golgotha, are you no longer a child of God, since you are devoid of all compassion for His sufferings? Do not rise up from your meditation to-day until your heart overflows with sorrow and sympathy with your crucified Redeemer, and do not rest content with feelings alone; show your compassion in a practical manner; suffer with Christ, by patiently bearing the cross laid upon you, whether it be physical suffering or the obligations of your calling, the restraint of the Rule, the slights to which you are subjected, or any other trial.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PIETA.

Many a time, my soul, before now, you have contemplated the touching image of the Pietà; your gaze has been fixed upon Mary, the Mother of dolors, sitting at

the foot of the cross, her heart filled with tender compassion, her eyes resting upon the lifeless body of her Son, which has been laid on her knees, her tears falling fast upon His sacred countenance, blanched with the pallor of death. Let your meditation this day, which is dedicated to the Mother of God, be upon the spectacle the Pietà presents.

1st. Mary casts her eyes on her dead Son, whose lifeless body is laid in her maternal arms. That look is expressive of the tenderest compassion, most poignant sorrow, unutterable sadness. She thinks how different it was when that same Child was clasped to her bosom in the stable at Bethlehem! Those features, now distorted by the anguish of death, then met her fond gaze with an engaging smile; the hands now piercéd by cruel wounds were then stretched out towards her with childlike affection; the sacred body now disfigured with blood and lacerations was then for her a source of holy rapture and maternal delight. “O sin, what hast thou done to my sweet Child, what has not my divine Son suffered on account of thee!” Such were the thoughts that filled her mind when she first beheld Christ’s lifeless body. Now, my soul, the moment is approaching when the most holy body of Christ will be deposited, not indeed in your arms, but in your heart. O before receiving it, cast your eyes with a look of compassion, of grief, of contrition, on that sacred form resting on Mary’s knees. Think, as she did, of the bitter suffering which that sacred body endured because of your sin; the sight of it will serve to soften your hard heart, to dispel its coldness, and thus prepare you in the best manner possible for the worthy reception of the Lord’s most holy body.

2d. Mary, holding the sacred body of her dead Son in her maternal arms, casts her eyes up to Heaven, raises them to her heavenly Father. That look is expressive of calm resignation, hallowed sacrifice, loving supplication. Sharply as her soul is pierced by the sword of sorrow at the sight of her dead Son, she submits to the will of God; she offers Him to her heavenly Father; she offers her own

sufferings and those of her Son, and prays fervently, earnestly, the body of her divine Child still resting on her knees, imploring mercy and pardon for the miserable sinners for whom He has just undergone the agony of death. My soul, when you have that sacred body in your heart, as Mary had in her arms, cast your eyes upward to your Father in Heaven. Offer to Him the precious treasure which has just been given to you. In this solemn moment when you are united to Jesus, you have it within your power to offer to God the most acceptable, the most glorious oblation of praise and thanksgiving. That is the opportune time to implore your heavenly Father to grant you what you need for your soul, for whose sake Christ died, what you need for your body, in which Christ's body is now present, what you need for your Brethren and Sisters, for the souls entrusted to your care, for all sinners on whose behalf the sacred body of our Lord hung and suffered on the cross. Make good use of this precious moment, and never omit thus to raise your eyes to Heaven.

3d. Furthermore Mary, still holding the most holy body of Christ in her maternal embrace, casts her eyes inward on herself. This look is expressive of thankfulness and joy even amid all her sorrows. She does indeed know full well what an inestimable treasure, what a wondrous, priceless possession now rests in her arms. This sacred body is the ransom of the whole sinful world; this sacred body is the treasury of the whole Christian Church; this sacred body is the strength of all future martyrs who will suffer for His sake; this sacred body is the bread of virgin souls, who lead on earth an angel's life; this sacred body is the medicine of the sick, the viaticum of the dying. And she, Mary, is the first who is privileged to hold it in her maternal arms, to pay to it the homage of her adoration, to moisten it with her tears, to kiss it with reverent devotion. This is a thought which cannot fail to be a powerful support, a mighty solace, a source of ecstatic delight to Mary's soul. My soul, take heed that you also cast your eyes on yourself, when you have that sacred body present in your heart. Remember that at this solemn moment you are

in the enjoyment of infinite happiness, an immense privilege, a blessing exceedingly great. The angels themselves might envy you your happiness, the distinction conferred on you. Wherefore at such seasons let your heart overflow with joy and thankfulness; as often as you see a Pietà, call to mind to-day's meditation, and when reciting Vespers on the eve of the day of your Communion, pray for grace to receive the most holy body of Christ in your heart as worthily as Mary received that same body in her maternal arms.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONDUCT TO BE PURSUED TOWARDS ONE WHOM WE HAVE OFFENDED.

To-day's Gospel places before your eyes the divine Teacher, Himself the pattern of fraternal charity, of charity towards one's neighbor, that is ready to forgive one's enemies, now emphatically urging upon us to refrain from indulging any feeling, however slight, of antipathy towards our neighbor. Listen to the admonition He gives us:

1st. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." (St. Matt. v. 23, 24.) Such is the heavenly teaching presented to us; every word is a rich mine of matter for our meditation. Hence you learn that you may only venture to approach God, you can only dare to offer Him an oblation, if your charity towards your Brethren, your Sisters, is pure and undisturbed. For, as St. Chrysostom says, unity and concord are more pleasing to God than sacrifice; that is to say, as long as there is any strife amongst the faithful, their oblation will not be accepted. God is therefore willing to set aside His own glory; He would rather forego the oblation which is His due than tolerate any breach of brotherly love and fellow-

ship. Consider this attentively, my soul, and take heed lest you go up to the altar, lest you receive Communion with feelings of animosity in your heart. For this reason avoid those trifling faults in your intercourse with others which are in themselves but a slight breach of charity, and yet too often take all the sweet consolation from your Communion, and deprive you of the fruit it would otherwise produce in you. Such little offences against charity are sneers and sarcastic speeches; they are, as St. Albert asserts, the sure sign of a corrupt heart, just as unpleasant breath is the sign that the digestive organs are out of order. Moreover the same may be said of that spirit of contradiction which incites a man to dispute about the most insignificant things, and defend his own opinion with an inconsistency and pertinacity that would lead one to suppose a kingdom to be at stake. "Contend not in words," is the counsel the Apostle gives to Timothy; again he says: "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient." (II. Tim. ii. 14, 24.)

2d. Consider the express command our Lord lays on the one who has offended: "Go first to be reconciled to thy brother." This reconciliation must be in proportion to and of the nature of the preceding offence. If you have offended in thought, be reconciled in thought; if you have offended in word, be reconciled in words; if you have offended by some act, be reconciled in act, for the penance whereby a sin is expiated ought to be of the same nature as the sin. Therefore if you have quarrelled with your brother, if there is any thing between him and you, do not wait long, for postponement only renders the matter more difficult; make friends with him as soon as ever you can, so that the sun may not go down upon your anger. Remember, too, that in being the first to hold out the hand of reconciliation, an excellent opportunity is offered you to practise the virtue of humility, that pearl of all virtues, of which St. Bonaventure justly says that through humility alone can the offence against charity be repaired. It requires a victory over self, but the happiness that you

will subsequently experience outweighs a hundredfold the slight effort which this self-conquest costs you.

3d. Consider the punishment of those who will not be reconciled, which our Lord announces in these words: “Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer and thou be cast into prison.” (v. 25.) According to St. Augustine, the adversary here spoken of is the law of God, which, by prohibiting enmity and contention, is at variance with our evil propensities. Submit to this adversary; obey this commandment whilst you are still in the way, that is, while there is yet time, before the end of this mortal existence, for were you to depart out of this life—and death may overtake you at any moment—without having been reconciled, woe betide you. Then your adversary, the divine law which you have violated, would deliver you to God, your Judge, and He would give you over to the officer, to Satan, who would cast you into the prison of hell. “Let not therefore the sun go down upon your anger.” (Eph. iv. 26.) You do not know whether you will see the light of another day, and if not, if you were to die unreconciled, what would become of you? Christ tells you in the words quoted above. Lay them to heart.

MONDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON VIGILANCE IN PRESERVING THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY.

Contemplate for a brief space the beauteous, glorious image which the virtue of chastity presents. Pass in review before your mental vision the fair forms of those virginal souls, who in their stainless purity follow the immaculate Lamb; dwell in thought upon the happiness, the peace, the joy of heart that the innocent enjoy, and then remember that we carry this priceless treasure in fragile vessels, and we ought to lay to heart the warn-

ing our Lord gave us, when He addressed the following words in solemn earnestness to the disciples:

1st. "I say unto you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." (St. Matt. v. 28.) These stern words from our Lord's lips ought to be a powerful incentive to us to keep watch over our eyes with special care. "As soon," says St. Ephrem, "as thou dost neglect to observe custody of the eyes, thy chastity is in danger." For as water escapes if there be a crack in the conduit-pipe, so chastity will speedily be lost if the soul spends itself on external things. "Death is come up through the windows," says the prophet Jeremias. (ch. ix. 21.) Again, the same prophet says in the Lamentations (iii. 51): "My eye hath wasted my soul." Just as a spark falling upon straw will occasion a great conflagration, so a single glance will not unfrequently kindle the fire of concupiscence within the soul. Ponder these words of Holy Scripture, these utterances of the saints and of your divine Teacher; think how an incautious look at a person of the other sex has perhaps caused you many a painful struggle which lasted weeks or even months.

2d. Consider the words immediately following upon those cited above: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out." (v. 29.) If it is a grievous sin to look upon persons of the other sex to lust after them, take heed that you avoid everything that might give rise to such a sin; pluck out before all else the lustful eye, that is to say, keep it in check, refrain from useless, bold, wandering glances. Holy Job once said: "I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job xxxi. 1.) "He knew full well," St. Gregory remarks, "that through the eyes evil thoughts will penetrate into the heart, and that careful custody of the eyes and of the doors of the senses is requisite to secure the safety of the heart and of the powers of the soul." Examine yourself, my soul, in this respect, see how it is with you concerning the custody of your eyes. St. Francis, our Seraphic Father, used not to allow himself to drink sufficient cold

water to quench his thirst, because he thought it was a difficult matter to satisfy nature without gratifying the senses and thus committing perhaps a venial sin; but you, alas! are so unguarded, so incautious, that you allow all freedom to your outward senses, to your eyes pre-eminently. How long do you mean to do thus?

3d. Consider that our Lord expressly says: “If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out.” St. Chrysostom explains the right eye as signifying a good intention, a good will. But, you will ask, how can my good intention become a cause of scandal, a source of temptation to me? Listen to what the same saint adds: “If I visit a woman in the interest of religion, that is a good intention, a right eye. But if through the frequency of my visits I were to feel a sensual attraction to her, or if others took scandal at them, my right eye would scandalize me. Then the behest must be obeyed: Pluck it out; discontinue the good work which you commenced with a pure intention.” Impress this deeply upon your mind. Do not trust the right eye. Fear this so-called holy, supernatural affection for persons of the other sex; shun close association with them for reasons of a religious nature; dread it as you would dread fire, nay even more than fire. It is the opinion of all the Fathers, more especially of St. Bonaventure, that spiritual affection is apt to degenerate into carnal love. How many, says our Seraphic Father, have been led to form friendships with the idea that their intercourse was subservient only to the glory of God, the salvation of souls! Yet by degrees this pure, holy love lost its supernatural character. Other feelings arose, the conversation assumed an altered tone. “Whereas you began by the Spirit, you would now be made perfect by the flesh” (Gal. iii. 3), says the Apostle. Therefore pluck out the right eye ruthlessly. And if you are a Priest, a Confessor, make a resolution this very day, never on any consideration to hold intercourse with the souls committed to your charge, if persons of the softer sex, except in the church, when called to their sick-room, or when your sacred office requires it of you. And then let your visits be brief and

keep watch over your senses, for if you do so—mark this—death will be made more easy to you.

TUESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONDUCT TO BE PURSUED TOWARD THOSE WHO OFFEND US OR WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES.

Fix your eyes on the divine Teacher; observe how with overflowing gentleness and loving-kindness He dispenses the bread of His heavenly doctrine to the assembled multitudes; how He proclaims the consoling, priceless, celestial truth to all alike without exception, both to the docile disciples and to the Scribes and Pharisees whose hearts are full of hatred and hostility. Whosoever has ears to hear may hear the truths of salvation. Thus our Lord by act and in deed gives a practical confirmation of the precept He enunciates, the precept of fraternal charity, that comprehensive, all-embracing charity which is to be extended to friend and foe alike. Listen in spirit to the words of the divine Teacher.

1st. “I say unto you not to resist evil” (St. Matt. v. 39); that is to say, do not resist the malicious offender. It is of course not meant that the authorities are not to punish evildoers, nor are we told that it is wrong to take measures for the protection, the defence of our good name, or prevent our property from being stolen. The one thing that is most strictly and emphatically forbidden is personal revenge, which is so prone to creep in under the appearance of lawful resistance or just punishment. How much men deceive themselves in this respect, and not only men of the world, but Priests also and Religious, for under the cloak of justice they cherish in their hearts the desire for revenge. Not for anything in the world, one says, would I have any misfortune happen to my brother, but I should like to say a few sharp, severe words to him, just to show him his fault. That reason is only a pretext; it is in

reality the bitterness of the heart which would fain vent itself by speaking bitterly to the offender. Another will perhaps exult when the one who has offended him is blamed and humiliated, saying it will be a salutary lesson for him. There again the man deceives himself; it is his thirst for revenge that is gratified. A third says: I wish him no evil, but I will have nothing more to do with him in future, for the sake of peace. No, that is also a delusion; it is bitterness of heart, a sense of injury that leads him to say that he will have nothing more to do with his brother. Does God have nothing more to do with us, who offend against Him daily? On the contrary, He deals with us most tenderly, most lovingly. Therefore "be merciful, forgive one another even as God hath forgiven you." (Eph. iv. 32.) Obey this admonition of the Apostle, do not resist evil under the pretext of justice; in other words, suppress every desire for revenge, even the least and slightest.

2d. Consider the perfection attained by those who obey this precept which our Lord lays down, who obey it literally, and bear affronts and persecutions without resistance. Observe that it is precisely in this that the generous, self-sacrificing courage that characterizes Christianity, its perfection, is displayed, inasmuch as it presents this virtue in a degree that cannot be surpassed to our view in the person of Him who brought this doctrine to earth from Heaven, Christ Jesus, the wondrous pattern and example of celestial patience towards those who insulted Him, who persecuted and crucified Him. Observe also how the holy martyrs followed eagerly in His footsteps; observe how every individual disciple of Christ and bearer of His cross, as well as the whole Church of God, from the outset faithful to His divine teaching, has at all times met the rising tide of hatred and calumny with an ever-increasing degree of that charity which rejoices in suffering and is ready to forgive. Observe all this, and you will no longer find it a hard and difficult task to act in conformity with this truly celestial teaching. You will rather find cause for gladness in perceiving to

what a high degree of evangelical perfection God has called you, and you will make it your practice, above all in trifling matters, in your daily intercourse with others, to obey the divine command: "Resist not evil."

3d. Consider that our Lord is not content with enjoining this upon us; He goes yet further, exhorting us thus: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (v. 44.) Now consider, according to St. Chrysostom's gloss, what are the several steps by which our Lord would lead us to the summit of perfect virtue. The first step is, not to be the one to give offence; the second, not to revenge yourself by doing to the offender what he did to you; the third, to abstain from retaliating in any manner; the fourth, to allow yourself to be ill-treated without resisting; the fifth, to prepare yourself to endure more than the offender has already inflicted on you; "Turn to him also the other cheek" (v. 39) our Lord says; the sixth, not to dislike him who has offended you; the seventh, to love him; the eighth and highest, to do good to him and pray for him. Ask yourself upon which step you stand. Perhaps you have not even set your foot on the first, and yet you will have to mount them all, for mark what our Lord adds in conclusion: "That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to shine upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." (v. 45.) Thus you see that your likeness to God depends upon your obeying this precept. Love for your enemies will make you a true child of your Father in Heaven; it will exalt you, who are dust and ashes, and fashion you to the image of God. St. Chrysostom says that because the commandment was great, the reward attached to keeping it is also great, likeness to God. Do you possess this divine resemblance, my soul? Your conduct towards those who offend you will give the answer to this query.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT
IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPHARNAUM.

To-day you are invited to contemplate our Lord as a great worker of miracles. Picture to yourself the striking scene, on which no one can look unmoved, portrayed by the Evangelist St. Mark. In His sublime majestic dignity Jesus stands before the man who is possessed, and speaking with the authority of an almighty, sovereign Ruler, cries aloud: "Speak no more, and go out of the man." (St. Mark i. 25.) Crying out with a loud voice and violently tearing his unfortunate victim, the unclean spirit is forced to obey. How amazed the Jews must have been at this miracle!

1st. Consider the significance of our Lord's miracles in general. Jesus Christ came into the world in the character of the Saviour, Redeemer, Rescuer of mankind, and such He now shows Himself to be by His miracles. He provides a remedy for human misery in all its diverse shapes, whether it be the sufferings of the outward, visible man, the maladies, manifold and multiform, to which man is subject from his cradle to his grave, or the hidden sorrows of the soul through the various degrees of guilt, pangs of conscience, spiritual death, and possession. By His miracles our Lord displays His power over sin and the consequences of sin, over corporal and spiritual miseries, and also exhibits His charity, the charity of Him who came to the help of all mankind. Consider in the second place, that the external miracles our Lord wrought are the outward and visible signs and pledges of the yet greater inward and spiritual miracles of grace, the graces He conveyed to us in the sacraments and sacramentals. Thus we find that for the most part the institution or proclamation of one of these miracles of grace is preceded by an outward, visible miracle. The miracu-

ious multiplication of the loaves took place shortly before our Lord promulgated the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist. He healed the man with the palsy before He said to him: "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; and He raised Lazarus to life from the dead before He delivered Himself to be put to death to save us from everlasting death. Thus every work our Lord wrought possesses, besides its apparent aim and object, a higher, mystic signification. You also could impart to your works, even to the most unimportant actions, a higher import, a greater value, if you were always to perform them in a state of grace and with a good intention. Do you do this?

2d. Consider in detail the different incidents of the miraculous cure of the man who was possessed. "There was a man with an unclean spirit," we are told in the Gospel. At his creation the purest, most beautiful of spirits, the nature of the devil is utterly perverted and corrupted by sin, and this unclean spirit has now taken up his abode in a human being, in a creature, that is, who was made in the image of God, destined to be the dwelling, the temple of the Holy Ghost. You will perhaps sigh over the sad contrast thus presented, but ask yourself whether you also are not in this pitiable condition? Look into your heart; scrutinize your thoughts, your desires; pay attention to your custody of the eyes, and then consider the words we read in Holy Scripture: "There was in the synagogue," in a hallowed spot therefore—and you are the inmate of such a place—a man in the power of an unclean spirit. "And he cried out with a loud voice," St. Mark adds; the presence of Jesus disquieted him, for as the Ven. Bede says, the presence of one who is holy is a torment to the devil. Impurity and sanctity have as little in common as fire and water. Hence it comes that you have a distaste for prayer, that you experience aridity in meditation, weariness in the church; that Holy Communion profits you little, as soon as impure thoughts or sinful desires creep into your heart, or perhaps the consciousness of some wrongful act weighs on your conscience. Offer your prayers to-day to Jesus, the great Worker of

miracles, for all the unhappy individuals who in the synagogue, in holy and hallowed places, the Priest at the altar, the Religious in the seclusion of the cloister, are "men with an unclean spirit," torn and harried by an evil conscience, that cries out in the near presence of the Holy One.

3d. Consider two other details of this miracle. The man who was possessed cried out to our Lord: "Thou art the Holy One of God." Jesus answers: "Speak no more." Eternal Truth will not permit a liar to bear witness to Him. By this our Lord would teach us never to lend an ear to evil spirits, even when they speak the truth, for since they are the enemies of our salvation and liars from the beginning they only employ truths as baits, whereby to deceive us. Consider that attentively, my soul, and not nearly so often be deluded when Satan puts forward truths, or even virtues, as a trap to ensnare you. He did the same thing when he tempted our Lord, quoting passages of Scripture, the utterances of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of eternal truth. Observe in the second place, that Satan tore the unfortunate man, and cried out yet more loudly when he went out of him. This, St. Gregory tells us, was intended to teach us that the devil, if he is driven out of a man by the grace of conversion, often assails him more vehemently than before. Lay this truth to heart for your comfort. It is no bad sign; on the contrary, it is a good sign if you have a greater number of temptations, more violent struggles to sustain after your conversion, after you have abandoned the world, after you have received the holy sacraments, than you had previously. It shows that Satan is afraid that he will lose his prey. Wherefore do not lose heart, but fight on valiantly; you are not alone in the synagogue where Satan tears you, for Jesus is with you.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER
PENTECOST.

ON THE HEALING OF ST. PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER.

To-day you are to accompany our Lord to St. Peter's house. There you will find his mother-in-law, to whom tradition gives the name of Joanna, lying sick, grievously tormented by a fit of fever. She probably little imagines that relief is so near; perhaps, craving for rest and quiet, she is not over well pleased to hear of the coming of the Visitor. Soon, however, she is to discover who it is who comes to her. Jesus commands the fever to leave her, and immediately she rises from her sick-bed in perfect health, her heart filled with joyous thankfulness. Keep this scene before your mind during your meditation.

1st. According to St. Ambrose, this woman suffering from fever in the natural order is a type of one in the spiritual order who is laid low by the fever of evil concupiscence; she represents a soul attacked by the burning heat of unruly passions. As fever acts upon the body, torturing and inflaming it, rendering it hot and restless, so the spiritual fever of corrupt inclinations and temptations acts upon the soul of man. Consider further; that fever is most dangerous which is not immediately recognized for what it is, which deprives him who is attacked by it of the use of his natural reason, and produces so morbid a state that when he is utterly prostrated by it, and even nearly at death's door, he believes himself to be as strong and well as any one. So it is in regard to the soul. Those spiritual fever-patients are in the most dangerous condition who do not know how sick they are, who are not aware that Satan too often assumes the disguise of an angel of light in order to delude the soul and cause that to appear to be divine inspiration and heavenly enlightenment which is in reality diabolical temptation and hellish darkness. For instance, you may form a rash and uncharitable judgment and consider it to be zeal

for justice; you may covet a superior position out of ambition and fancy your wish is dictated by pure love of souls; you may infringe the rules of simple obedience under color of a more enlightened aspiration after perfection; you may mix too freely with世俗s from motives of self-interest under the plausible pretext of doing them good. All these are vain delusions of the fever-stricken brain. Trust not in such matters to your own judgment any more than the fever-patient can trust the dreams of delirium. Call upon Jesus, the heavenly Physician; implore Him to enlighten you, to enlighten your spiritual director, to whom you ought to disclose all that is in your mind, for nothing is more to be dreaded than the faults which we do not recognize as faults, which we excuse, or which we deem of small account.

2d. Consider that Jesus takes the sick woman by the hand, and she immediately rises from her couch. (St. Mark i. 31.) The hand our Lord extends to her signifies His preventing grace, which first comes to the aid of the spiritually sick, rousing him from his sinful torpor, supporting him, helping him to rise from the sick-bed on which he lies. But mark this: Our Lord only takes the patient by the hand; He does not entirely lift her up, she must arise of her own accord. Even so the soul that is prostrated by the fever of sin must bestir himself, he must co-operate with the actual grace whereby he is assisted. For God does not do all for us and without our co-operation. How many forget this! Our Lord comes to them, He extends to them His merciful hand, but they do not take it; they will not rise up from the sick-bed of sinful habits; they will not correct their perverse will. Think, my soul, how often you in like manner have thrust aside the gracious hand our Lord offers you. For weeks past, nay, for years, you have heard a voice of solemn warning in the season of meditation, at the time of confession, exhorting you to give up this or that feeling of aversion, these incessant slight infractions of the Rule, these visits, and the like. But you turn a deaf ear to that voice, and meanwhile complain of the temptations that assail you,

and the slight progress you make in virtue. Delay not, but this very day grasp the hand of the heavenly Physician.

3d. Consider this, that the Evangelist relates of the patient after her cure: "She ministered unto them." She forthwith devotes her newly regained strength to the service of Him from whom she has received such marvellous help and relief. Hence we are to learn and impress on our mind, that the man who in his spiritual sickness employed his members in the service of sin, now that he is healed by Jesus of his malady ought to employ them in the service of God, remembering the admonition of the great Apostle: "For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification." (Rom. vi. 19.) Lay this admonition to heart, my soul; remember you are called of God, and called out of thousands. Conceive a high esteem for this great grace, and ponder the words of the author of the Imitation: "Can it be much to serve Thee, whom every creature is bound to serve? It ought not to seem much to me to serve Thee; but this rather is to me great and wonderful that Thou dost deign to receive into Thy service one so poor and unworthy, and to make him one of Thy chosen servants. Oh sacred state of religious bondage, which makes men equal to angels, to be reconciled with God, terrible to the devils, and a praise to all the faithful." (Imit. B. iii. ch. 10.) Thus do the servants of God, His true servants, regard their state, and would you, my soul, murmur and complain, and deem the divine yoke too heavy to be borne? Shame upon such weakness!

FRIDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CONTRITION WHICH OUR LORD'S PASSION SHOULD EXCITE IN US.

To-day, when special remembrance is made of our Lord's death, raise your eyes to the crucifix, and behold how the great Teacher and Worker of miracles whose infinite charity you have with thankfulness and joyfulness of heart been contemplating in the course of your meditations, now hangs upon the cross in agony; He, the innocent, is suffering for you, the guilty. There is no more painful sight, nothing is more calculated to inspire us with sentiments of deep sympathy and pity, than the sight of a child tortured by agonizing pain. Innocence suffering appeals not in vain to the stoniest heart. Yet you can look day by day on your crucified Lord, on suffering innocence, and feel no grief, nor even compunction for your sins, which He who is perfect innocence is expiating. Oh consider this, that from henceforth you may be moved to contrition by meditating upon the Passion of Christ.

1st. Consider what unutterable grief a son would feel who through carelessness had inflicted a severe wound upon his father. The sight of the sufferer would cut him to the heart; every groan the sick man uttered would pierce his soul like a sword; how tortured with remorse for his want of caution that son would be; and if the injury he had caused were to prove fatal, imagine if you can what his feelings would be when he stood beside his father's death-bed, or at the grave where his greatest benefactor was interred. Now ask yourself, my soul, where is a parent to be met with whose love for his children equals that of Christ for us? This Father is the author not only of our terrestrial being, but of our heavenly life; this Father provides us not merely with material bread, but with the supersubstantial bread, His own body and blood. Now be-

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hold Him covered with wounds, behold Him in His agony and distress, behold His features overspread with a deadly pallor, and remember that you, His own child, have caused your Father this suffering, this woe, and caused it not inadvertently, but with deliberate malice. Is it possible, if this be true, that you can look upon Jesus crucified without experiencing contrition, most bitter contrition?

2d. Consider that we read how a great tempest once arose in the sea on which was the ship that had on board the prophet Jonas. When the storm went on increasing in fury, when alarm and terror seized on all the passengers, and even the weather-beaten mariners began to grow pale, Jonas, awakened out of a deep sleep, felt pity for the terrified and trembling ship's company. He acknowledged and confessed himself to be the guilty cause of the great tempest, and uttered these magnanimous words, worthy of one of God's prophets: "Take me up, and cast me into the sea; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." (Jonas i. 12.) It is not your fellow mortals but your God; not sinners but the Just One whom you, my soul, see tossed in the stormy ocean of pain and distress, whom you behold in the agony of death, pallid through suffering; oh why then do you not penitently acknowledge that for your sake this tempest has come upon Calvary; why do you not like Magdalen embrace the cross which your sins have fashioned, shedding abundant tears of compunction; why do you not cry aloud with David: "It is I, I am he that have sinned; I have done wickedly. Let Thy hand, I beseech Thee, be turned against me." (II. Kings xxiv. 17.)

3d. Consider that you are much worse than Judas, if our Lord's Passion does not move you to contrition. For although Judas fell so deeply that he sold and betrayed his Master, yet, when he saw the consequences of his shameful treachery, when he saw his Master led away to torture and to death, such terrible remorse took possession of him that he threw down the price of blood at the feet of the priests, and, beside himself with grief, exclaimed: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood";

finally, in despairing regret for what he had done, he went and hanged himself. His was not, of a truth, the right kind of sorrow, but instead of despising the unhappy apostle for the lack of that right contrition which proved his perdition, lament and bewail your own lack, not of right contrition only, but of all contrition; do not show yourself to be a worse man than Judas was, and do not rise to-day from your meditation without awakening in your soul true compunction for your sins, the iniquities for which Christ was wounded, the transgressions for which He was bruised.

SATURDAY AFTER THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON WHAT OUR CONVERSATION OUGHT TO BE.

Place before your eyes the divine Teacher; imagine that you see Him sitting on what is known as the Mount of Beatitudes, instructing His disciples and the assembled multitude. In the celebrated sermon on the mount He preaches to them the new law, the teaching of the New Covenant, proclaiming to them the profound, sublime truths which form the summary of Christian perfection. Take your stand in imagination amongst His hearers; lay to heart these words which you hear from His lips: "Let your speech be yea, yea, no, no" (St. Matt. v. 37), and let them form the subject of your meditation.

1st. In these words our Lord exhorts us above all to be brief and concise in speech, to let our words be few, for as the Wise Man most justly declares: "In many words shall be found folly." Nothing is more desirable than to talk as little as possible to other people. The saints often repeated to themselves for their warning this well-known saying: "I have often repented of speaking, but never of having been silent." This is not wonderful, for as St. Jerome remarks, words once uttered can no more be recalled than a stone which one has cast away. Listen to

the lament of the author of the *Imitation*, who says: "Oft-times I could wish I had been silent, and that I had not been in company with men. But why are we so willing to talk and discourse with one another, albeit we seldom return to silence without hurt of conscience?" Ponder these admirable sayings of the saints, and resolve to-day in accordance with our Lord's precept to speak more rarely and say less when you do speak, than heretofore, and thus you will be less likely to offend against God.

2d. Consider that in the words of our Lord which are quoted above, He exhorts us, as St. Augustine explains the passage, to adhere closely to the truth in our speech, abjuring all guile or exaggeration, all falsehood and hypocrisy, for "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xii. 22.) It is of course superfluous, or it ought to be superfluous, to warn Priests and Religious against actual untruth, for if in the code of ordinary society lying is considered disgraceful and a proof of ill-breeding, how much more therefore is it to be banished from those who are consecrated to God? Yet we shall do well to lay to heart our Lord's admonition, and beware lest we fall into two other faults equally at variance with His precept. Above all, St. Bonaventure enjoins, be on your guard against exaggeration, which assorts ill with the gravity and decorum which should mark the Religious. Besides, those who are in the habit of exaggerating soon come to be as little believed as actual liars are. The second fault which we ought to avoid is indicated by St. Augustine when he writes: Every wilful misrepresentation, every equivocation is in itself a sort of lie. Let your conversation be both truthful and simple, that is, sincere, clear, without ambiguity. For only when your speech is free from guile and deceit, from misrepresentation and ambiguity, when you speak in the simplicity of your heart, do you fully obey our Lord's precept: "Let your speech be yea, yea, no, no"; and He adds: "that which is over and above these is of evil." The Wise Man also says: "He that speaketh sophistically is hateful." (Ecclus. xxxvii. 23.)

3d. Finally consider that, in your character of Religious,

of a Christian striving after perfection, Christ lives in you. You can say with the holy martyr Ignatius, "I bear Christ within me, for it is written: I will dwell with them and walk with them." If you ponder well this truth, my soul, you will feel that you could no more at any time engage in idle, useless, frivolous conversation, than you could when you were carrying the Blessed Sacrament, or when you had just received Holy Communion. As at such moments you would only open your lips to speak the praises of God, or for the edification and spiritual advancement of your neighbor, so you ought to observe this rule in your ordinary, daily life, remembering that you continually bear Christ about with you, that you are a living tabernacle. One can in a moment distinguish between a real and a half-hearted Christian, between the strict Religious and the lax, by his conversation. Happy the tongue, as St. Jerome remarks, which can only speak of divine things. And St. Basil says: "If foolish conversation goes on in your presence pay little heed to it. Let what is said to you about worldly matters have a bitter savor to you, but let what is told you concerning God-fearing persons, those who follow after justice, be sweet as honey to your taste." Reflect upon this, my soul, and make a special resolution to-day for the regulation of your conversation in the future; determine what faults you will avoid, and what must be the subject of your talk, the aim of all you say, if you would fully carry out in practice our Lord's command: "Let your speech be yea, yea, no, no; that which is over and above these is of evil."

END OF VOLUME I.









